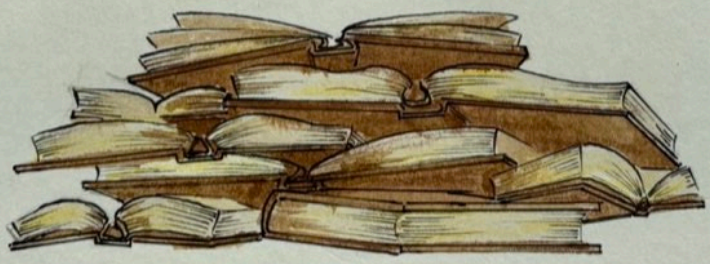
Magister-Auctor Saga



Enslaved by power

Babitha Chakma

Zairabu Chebol

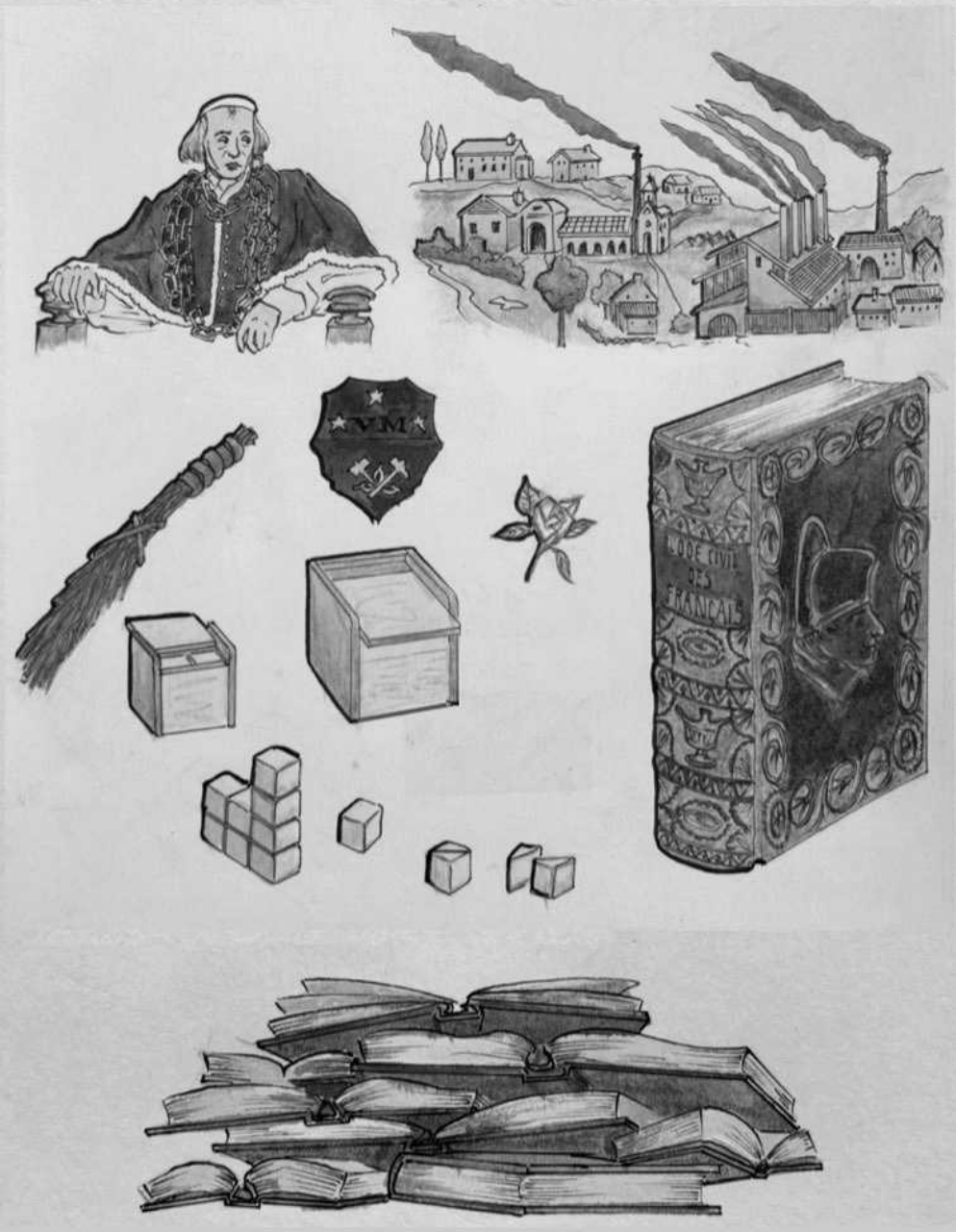
Version 2.03

Title: *The Magister-Auctor Saga. 05. Enslaved by Power*
Original Titel: *De Magister Auctor Saga. 05. Slaven van de Macht*
Co-Authors: Babitha Chakma en Zainabu Cheboi
E-book in Pages with Charter 14 font

Completely revised version of 122.25 by Maria Liber

For the twenty-first century, **The Magister-Auctor Saga** © 2020-2026 **Pascal Paulus** with book cover by **Frank Nuyts** is published under the **CC BY-NC-ND 4.0** license.

Magister-Auctor Saga



Enslaved by power

Babitha Chakma

Zairabu Chebol

To Manuel, Sebastião
and Olívia

The Empire of the Discouraged

Between Ostend and Bruges

It is now clear that whoever seized power in France developed an equally strong urge for possession as the former royal family, thinks Jan Lemaître.

Jan Lemaître and Madeleine Lacour are visiting their son Jean-Jacques and daughter-in-law Élise Duchamp. While Madeleine spoils her eight-year-old grandson, Jan continues to think about a story he heard about the training of French soldiers, even before the King was sidelined by the French National Assembly. François Picard, an officer in the new French army, told him about it. In the past year, he had gradually evolved from a billeted officer to a family friend. He believes the French army is so efficient because superiors assume that soldiers can indeed reason. He also mentioned that Count de Guibert had written in the early 70s, "*In general, we do not reason enough with the soldier, and especially with the French soldier, whose intelligence allows him to understand many things. However, the firmness of a troop would increase because each individual would be more convinced of the goodness of the order and the disposition in which he is arrayed.* Jan thinks about what François said further, that there has been a lot of reasoning with the soldiers in recent years, and that the revolution may not be unrelated to this.

But still, Jan doubts the point of reasoning when it comes to improving a war machine. It is now abundantly clear that the *Directoire* that rules France and the occupied territories today has always been able to count on this army and those among its

leaders who swore loyalty to these new French administrators. But despite all the reasoning — with that, Jan returns to his initial thought — King or *Directoire* it makes little difference. Whoever controls the government wants to consolidate power. There's no less scheming and intrigue than there was at the Court in the past, even among brilliant military leaders. Just think of that Corsican patriot, now appointed brigadier general by Viscount de Barras, who you could say is the current leader of France. He was briefly imprisoned after the execution of Robespierre when he was suspected of being a follower of yet another disgraced former leader. And now he's apparently proving himself an excellent strategist, there are again voices calling for him to be kept out of the spotlight. But that probably won't work, Jan continues to think. In a sense, Viscount de Barras is protecting him, but only with the intention of keeping him under control. His boundless ambition would even surpass that of Barras.

Jan is now sixty-three. Together with Madeleine, and after consulting with Jean-Jacques, he decided to leave the schoolhouse to Boudewijn and Gertrude. Karel and Tiene, who are a few years younger than Jan and Madeleine, will help them with this takeover and in finding new partners.
They also agreed that Boudewijn and Gertrude would move into the house on Keizerskaai, while Jan and Mathilde would take over their house on Kapellestraat. Everything has been arranged by notarial deed. Boudewijn and Gertrude have already moved in. Minor renovations are underway at the house on Kapellestraat, which is the reason for their temporary stay in

Bruges.

Jan hears Madeleine read a poem by Van Alphen to little Lodewijk, who hangs on her every word. Although Jan himself thinks Van Alphen's children's poems often contain a too transparent moral message, it's still a significant step forward that there are now stories and texts specifically for children, designed to help them enjoy reading and being read aloud. The poem Madeleine reads today is now well-known among teachers and educators:

The Plum Tree, A Story

Jantje once saw plums hanging,
Oh! as big as eggs they were
It seemed that Jantje wanted to go picking,
Although his father forbade him there
Here, he said, neither my father,
who sees it, nor the gardener,:
On a tree, so fully loaded,
Picking five or six plums, they will not miss them.
But I want to be obedient, I say
I don't pick them I'll walk away.
Should I, for a handful of plums,
Become a disobedient creature? No.
Forth went Jantje, but his father though
Who quietly had been listening,
Met him while walking,
At the front of the aisle.
Come, my Jantje! father said
Come my little heartbreaker!
I will pick you plums,
As father now loves Jantje.

He started shaking the tree
Jantje quickly picks up plums;
And with his hat full of fruit,
Jantje walked away with a fast foot.

Jan thinks a little wistfully about his parents. Then he has to smile. Dieudonné would never have shaken a plum tree to give him a hat full of fruit. Besides, as far as he can remember, as child he never owned a hat. He chuckles at this mental leap: no hat, no plums…

The Greysel family is visiting Jean-Jacques and Élise. Hanne is six and has recently become part of the small Bruges Schoolhouse community. While the children start playing, the adults turn the conversation to the new regulations from France that further limit the power of the Church in relation to the secular state. The close friendship between the two families allows them to openly discuss their differing views on the roles of Church and State. Devout Catholic grandfather Greysel watches with dismay how all charities are now coming under the control of government officials, now becoming public institutions. And not only had the presence of clergy been restricted in education and healthcare, but now the religious congregations involved in these activities have even been legally abolished.

Jean-Jacques notes that the idea of general rules that don't depend on religion or conversion to a particular religion seems right to him. He fears that, just as there are honest and dishonest religious figures, there will also be honest and dishonest civil servants. Simply transferring structures from one

sphere of power to another won't necessarily lead to significant change.

The conversation then turns to the transfer of the church's population registers to the town hall. Toon Greysels finds it a strange idea that births, marriages, and deaths will now be a civil matter. Jean-Jacques wonders whether the urge to keep track of everything, and record it, is a good or bad thing for individuals. He agrees with Toon that it's important for the church community to keep track of who wants to belong to that community and who is accepted. Of course, for those who view their relationship with someone else as a religious matter, it's logical that this is registered within their faith community. But he doesn't see why succession and the division of property in the event of death or a marriage being declared invalid should be a church matter. He sees that more as an agreement between individuals and therefore something that should be recorded by a notary. The binding and dissolving of marriages perhaps required, and still require, ratification by those considered God's representatives on earth in royal houses. Yet Jean-Jacques wonders whether the Almighty is truly interested in the bed stories of Princes on earth who invoke Him to sell their kingship to the rest of the population. He does, he says, have the impression that differing views on similar and divergent religious texts generally encourage childbearing. The disagreement over the legal status of these children seems to him more a problem for rulers throughout history: primarily the royal families, but, perhaps as a result, also the aristocracy or those who simply own property.

Jean-Jacques and Élise learn from the Greysel family that it appears many priests in France have lost their income, while it's far from the case that they are being paid by the state, as some defenders of the republic claim. It's difficult to determine exactly what's happening. Exiled priests are also appearing in Bruges, and they talk about their colleagues being murdered, often by ill-informed, agitated citizens.

It is clear that about two years ago the French troops used the book *Voyage Pittoresque de la Flandre et du Brabant* by painter and art connoisseur Descamps attempted to steal the most valuable sculptures and paintings from monasteries and churches. According to auctioneer Greysel, at least 192 important paintings were involved. It is unknown whether they were destroyed or sold, but there are rumours some of the works ended up in the Louvre, a public museum since 1793. *National Assembly* was apparently aware of the danger that many art treasures could be destroyed during assaults and other outbreaks of popular anger. And although many agree with Mirabeau that the clergy cannot own works of art in monasteries and churches, confiscating them often leads to their sale. This was precisely what Mirabeau himself wanted to avoid, hence the proposal to give museums a public character. When Jean-Jacques discusses this with his father, he says that transforming the Louvre from a private museum of the now-defunct royal family to a public museum is, in a sense, the development of an idea of the Marquis de Marigny. If his memory serves him correctly, Jan says, the encyclopedia by Diderot and d'Alembert contains an article about the Louvre

along these lines, perhaps written by the Marquis himself. Father and son search the library of the Bruges Schoolhouse and indeed find the article in question in volume IX of the copy of the Encyclopedia purchased by Dieudonné and brought by Mathilde when she left Lille after Dieudonné's death. It states, among other things: '*The completion of this majestic building, executed in the greatest splendour, still leaves much to be desired. For example, we would like the entire ground floor of the building to be cleaned and the porticos restored. These would then serve to showcase the finest sculptures of the kingdom, to gather these precious works, scattered throughout the gardens where no one walks anymore, and where the air, the weather, and the seasons cause them to be lost, destroyed, and ruined. In the southern section, we could place all the king's paintings, which are currently piled up and jumbled in storage rooms, so that no one can enjoy them. The gallery of plans would be located in the north, if there are no obstacles. The cabinets of natural history and medals could also be moved to other parts of this palace.*'

Jan and Jean-Jacques naturally believe it's justified that works of art should be properly preserved and publicly exhibited. But they are painfully aware that it's not enough to have public property available to everyone. Everyone must also have sufficient resources to feed, clothe, and educate themselves, and also have time to view and understand the works of art. And that's still a pipe dream. Perhaps even more than, say, ten or fifteen years ago. Meanwhile, they often doubt the real intentions of the French occupiers. The Capuchin Brothers in Oostende were recently evicted from their quarters. The entire

estate is simply being auctioned off. But that in itself doesn't bring new prosperity to Oostende. On the contrary. They are concerned about the declining economic prosperity. As a result, even the upper middle class in Flanders in general, and in Oostende in particular, is once again struggling. Salt mining has almost completely ground to a halt. A few shipyards are still active, but far fewer than during the American War. The end of that war is causing many traders, exchange offices, and receivers to leave the city.

Child labour continues to rise among the poorer population. In Ghent, forty out of every hundred wage workers are children. You find them mainly in the central workshops, which the French have been using for a while now use the word *fabrique*: the place where things are made, manufactured. Wherever those *fabriques* pop up you see the same thing happening, poor children go to work at a young age and don't go to school, except perhaps on a Sunday.

Jean-Jacques has serious doubts about Sunday schools. A smaller group, consisting of wealthy citizens who owe their prosperity to free or dirt-cheap labour, despite all the Enlightenment, often presents Sunday schools as a philanthropic project. In England, there is even a *Sunday School Movement* inspired by the magnate Raikes with the aim of teaching poor young children from the working population the catechism and learning to read.

Meanwhile, charity schools are also popping up, open on weekdays. Jean-Jacques tries to find out more about this, but one thing is already clear: schools for the elite remain carefully

separated from those for the poor. Likewise, it remains considered perfectly normal, even natural, that coming from a rich or poor family determines the fate of children, because rich or poor is also considered a natural condition.

Jean-Jacques hears from Boudewijn how the new America, the model of a country of freedom, deals with republican ideas, which he believes confirms his thesis. He gradually learns more about the vice president from his time as governor of Virginia before he spent time in France during the years of the inauguration of the *National Assembly*, followed by the *Directory*. Jefferson then seemed resolutely committed to a more general dissemination of knowledge among the white population. He proposed a three-tiered educational system, intended to provide everyone with a minimum education. This, he argued, would also allow for the identification and further development of promising individuals, needed to fill leadership positions in the next generation. For the first tier, he wanted to build enough schools in each province to provide all children with at least three years of teaching '*reading, writing and simple arithmetic*' as well as classical history. Ultimately, Boudewijn notes, Jefferson may have been less concerned with the general dissemination of knowledge, but more with the creation of a kind of natural aristocracy among the white population as a result of the selection of promising boys who went to a *County Grammar School* are sent to study further.
Jean-Jacques notes that with this proposal to give all white boys a basic education not for religious reasons but to pass on knowledge and science, Jefferson demonstrates he was acting in

the spirit of the philosophers of the Enlightenment. He is said to have argued, among other things, that he considered it unwise *to place the Bible and the Testament in the hands of children at an age when their judgment is not yet sufficiently mature for religious questions*. And that, in turn, was the reason why religion shouldn't be taught in primary school. Perhaps that was also a reason why his proposals never gained support, Jean-Jacques concludes.

Jean-Jacques speaks with Élise about that exchange of thoughts with Boudewijn, and she wonders whether rejecting Jefferson's proposals is a good or a bad thing. Seeing her husband's questioning look, she says that it's about the Jefferson who writes that all people are created equal, yet believes that Black People are different and can therefore be held as slaves, and that Native Americans can be driven from their homes as soon as whites demand their "right to use the land". Jefferson may warn of the danger of religion being a dogma rather than a guide to one's life, but at the same time, he is guided by another, less explicit, equally dangerous dogma. This one holds that women, Black people, Native Americans, and people with a culture different from Europeans cannot be considered equal. White men swear by it. But, Élise continues, what we hear about other advocates of universal education in America isn't necessarily better. She summarises in a few words the essay Noah Webster published a few years ago under the title *On the Education of Youth in America*. For Webster, public education is primarily a means of fostering strong nationalistic feelings among the young inhabitants of the young United States. He even advises parents

to make the name *Washington* the first word to teach their children. You can laugh at it, but this kind of nationalism can be dangerous. It's a bit like what we went through with members of the *National Assembly* or of the *Directory* who defend French nationalism. If wealthy royal families are replaced by a nationalist aristocracy emerging from citizens encouraged to embrace this kind of nationalism, the future doesn't look very bright. According to Élise, Noah Webster also makes dubious claims about using the Bible not as a schoolbook, but as a source of religion and morality. According to Webster, using the Bible as a schoolbook trivialises the Holy Scripture and desensitises children to it, which doesn't promote morality.
Jean-Jacques reflects on what Élise tells him. It's a curious argument, to say the least, to no longer use the Bible as a basis for learning to read… even for those who use it as a basis for interpreting and organising the world and human relationships. All in all, it seems the American Revolution didn't significantly change the distinction between educating the children of property owners and moralising the children of the poor… just as the French Revolution didn't.

It seems that the approaching turn of the century will be marked by the ongoing struggle between supporters of royal and imperial families and republicans, especially in Europe and America. In the eastern Northern Hemisphere, dynasties and emperors so far seem to be experiencing little impact from the ongoing industrialisation that is making the Third Estate richer and more powerful. And most of the global South remains under the yoke of Europe. The occupied territories listed as

colonies, commonwealths, or overseas provinces are primarily mining areas that ensure that the ruling families and population groups in the Northern Hemisphere continue to enrich themselves.
Despite a form of republican alliance between France and the United States of America, the John Adams administration believes that *Republican* France should not inherit the credits of the *Kingdom* France. This allows the American legislature to deny previous debts to France. New conflicts are looming. It is currently unclear whether these will be trade disputes or whether war will break out again between the United States of America and certain European states.

At the *Bruges Study Circle* Jean-Jacques and Élise Duchamp follow current events as closely as possible. They focus primarily on knowledge, science, education, and the relationship between those with power and those without. According to its members, European rulers and governments have not shown themselves more favourable toward *subjects* than the Europe of absolute monarchs. Despite the Enlightenment, knowledge, power, and oppression continue to coexist. Some efforts are being made to abolish serfdom, but these have formal rather than practical consequences. In principle, people are freer to move and settle where they wish, but those without their own income from possessions are and remain dependent on those seeking to buy labour. This creates a new kind of serfdom: rural serfs become the inhabitants of ever-expanding slums in more and more cities.
During that period when the *Bruges Study Circle* discusses

successive administrative decisions in France *Directory* of *Convention*. Formally, this *Directory* governs also Flanders. The circle's attention is naturally primarily focused on decisions that affect learning and education. The *Directory* continues the line of the *Convention* and closes universities with the intention of reducing the influence of the ecclesiastical authorities on the acquisition of knowledge and scientific research. In 1797, it was the turn of the University of Leuven. Élise's parents recount that the newly founded *Central School of Brussels* sent its librarian to Leuven to organize the transfer of a large part of the Leuven library to Brussels and to lay the foundation for a public library. That librarian is Charles Antoine de Santander. He studied with the Jesuits and, just at the moment the Jesuit Order was abolished, he accepted the novitiate. He is now employed by the *Directory* established French administration. There is, of course, some sniggering about the remarkable flexibility of those who received a Jesuit education, although some speak less kindly of hypocrisy. A silver lining, says Jean-Jacques, is that Santander ensures that one doesn't have to go to Paris to access important books and writings from the former Leuven library. Élise ironically notes that if higher education continues to be reserved for a select few of the male population, those books and writings will enjoy as little public interest in Brussels as in Paris. The members of the *Bruges Study Circle* agree that good libraries, with or without the curiosities Charles Antoine de Santander wants to make public in Brussels, are important for encouraging reading. But for this to happen, everyone must have the opportunity to learn to read.

Élise's ironic remarks relate to the collection of biographies she began several years ago about women who play or have played an important role in the development of knowledge and science. Like previous generations of the Lemaître family, Jean-Jacques and Élise want to further publicise the lives of these women. They want to emphasise once again that many who advocate innovative ideas often pay little attention to the female part of the population. Élise recently discovered Sophie Germain, daughter of a merchant and representative of the Third Estate in the *Constituent Assembly*, which François Picard once mentioned during a conversation with her in-laws. During the Terror years, she studied at home. According to François, her story shows that the Third Estate follows the same line of thought as the aristocracy: women should preferably not study too much. Sophie's father had long tried to dissuade her from studying things like Latin, Greek, and mathematics. But there was also Joseph Louis Lagrange, as Élise now knows from her father, who closely followed the developments of the *Normal School* and *Central Schools* including th e*Central School of Public Works* in Paris known for several years as *Polytechnic School*. Lagrange belongs to a select group of mathematicians and is associated with both schools. Not long ago, he, together with Condorcet, defended the generalisation of access to knowledge, stating that his brilliant student *Monsieur Blanc* would actually be Sophie Germain. Élise intends to follow in Sophie Germain's footsteps for as long as she can. She is a kind of a new Emilie du Châtelet but from a different class. For the rest, it remains a nearly impossible task for women to produce scientific work. As

mentioned, the French Revolution brought little change. So it's welcome news for Élise when Gertrude tells her that Martha McTiers and Lady Skeffington receive admittance for their project of *Unions School* in Belfast and mentor twenty-one girls today. A drop in the ocean, but still…

From the British Empire comes other interesting news regarding the role of women in science. Élise knows that Caroline Herschel has just submitted a manuscript to the *Royal Society* in which she refers, among other things, the eight comets she discovered since 1786, eleven years ago.

Since Lady Montagu [see *A dangerous thought*] advocated for the introduction of variolation in the fight against smallpox, science in which women were and still are involved is also evolving in this field. Edward Jenner [See *The privilege of knowing*] has his vaccines further improved and now publishes his research in book form entitled *An Inquiry into the Causes and Effects of the Variolae Vaccinae; a Disease Discovered in some of the Western Counties of England, Particularly Gloucestershire, and Known by the Name of The Cow Pox.*

Meanwhile, Jean-Jacques hears a discussion about the reading method of his namesake, the Leiden boarding school owner Jean-Jacques Schneither. In Zeeland, they want to verify his claim that it's possible to teach children to read in sixty hours without using spelling lessons. Schneither developed a variation on the phonics methods that were also gaining acceptance in French republican schools. The Zeeland friends write to Jean-Jacques that there is interest in the approach, but there is questioning whether children will be able to write well later

without learning to read and spell. “Good writing” here means following current spelling and not that everyone will suddenly start writing poetry or essays, Élise notes wittily.

In Middelburg, there is talk of the new teaching method developed by preacher Hendrik van den Hespel. In his book *Nieuwe leerwijze om kinderen langs eenen gemakkelyken en korten weg het leezen en schryven gelyktydig te leeren [New teaching method to teach children to read and write simultaneously in an easy and short way]* Van den Hespel criticises the method in which simply learning to spell can take up to two years. He believes that learning the alphabet based on looking at pictures is a waste of time. He says he bases his proposal on conversations between children and proposes a method in which speaking, spelling, reading, and writing are addressed simultaneously. Jean-Jacques finds this even more fascinating than the emerging phonics methods, such as Schneither’s. He sees a certain connection with the idea that writing historically precedes reading. He recalls conversations with his father about the so-called child prodigies of the music world and about recording stories. But few see any merit in Hendrik Van den Hespel’s proposals. Such a method, they say, does not benefit the efficiency of the improving school system. Jean-Jacques can’t help but think that not everyone is thrilled with the fact that large segments of the working population are supposedly doing more than reading and developing too much thinking and writing capacity. He can’t imagine how soon he’ll return to the same idea. Joseph Lancaster is currently experimenting with his school for poor children in England, teaching large groups of

students reading, writing, arithmetic, and religion as quickly as possible. His primary goal is to quickly equip all the poor with a limited basic knowledge.

There is once more unrest in France. The *Directory* is not having an easy time, not even in the occupied territories. There is also renewed open hostility between the French rulers and the English royal family. In early 1798, the *Directory* General Bonaparte is on a reconnaissance mission to the North Sea coast. The general visits Boulogne, Calais, Dunkirk, Nieuwpoort, and also Oostende where he is received by Mayor Wieland. The general visits the fortifications on the right bank of the harbour and investigates where a permanent army can be stationed. He spends the night at number 69 Langestraat.
Shortly thereafter, King George III of England orders the British fleet to thwart Napoleon's plans to concentrate troops in Flanders to defend the Scheldt and North Sea ports. A surprise manoeuvre in Klemskerke and the attempt to destroy the locks at Slijkens failed. More than a hundred English soldiers are captured. Meanwhile, the fishermen discuss how decisions were being poorly implemented: the French general ordered the dredging of the silting harbour channel. But this does not happen as planned. By the end of the year, the channel is so silted up that only fishing boats and a few regular shipments of wood and salt can enter the harbour.

Jan and Madeleine are finding it increasingly difficult to communicate with their English correspondents in this wartime atmosphere. One never knows whether messages from England

will be suppressed, or worse, considered secret coded documents. Suddenly, one could be arrested as a spy…The situation worsens further when the city is formally placed under a state of siege. The French general decides to do this because he senses that the population has more sympathy for the Austrian rulers than for the French. After all, they are thinking of the city's former prosperity. But today, things are becoming increasingly difficult. Due to the state of siege, the remaining little trade remains almost completely grinds to a halt. The Lemaître family is also finding things more difficult now there is less income from their investments in the shipping company. Fortunately, the local fish processing industry still brings in some income, and the family also has reserves. So, they hope to be able to survive this new difficult period. It is, of course, sad for their friends, Boudewijn and Gertrude, to see that fewer and fewer paying children are coming to the Schoolhouse. No, the French occupation is really not a good thing, and it's normal that many here often sigh about the past glory days with the Austrian Rulers. For those living in Oostende or Bruges, the situation worsens after the news that Napoleon Bonaparte, along with Emanuel Sièges, has seized power in France. *Directory* has been abolished and Napoleon installs himself in the *Consulate*. He assumes the position of first consul, subsequently abandoning Sièges. Cambacéres and Lebrun ultimately become respectively second and third consuls. Napoleon consolidates his grip on power after escaping an assassination attempt just before the turn of the century while on his way to a theater performance. He takes advantage of this

to have several royalists and Jacobins he despises executed or deported. But this display of power that leaves the inhabitants of Oostende rather indifferent. The last year of the eighteenth century is one of widespread poverty.

In Bruges, Jean-Jacques learns of the existence of what he soon calls the *Lancaster instruction factory*. This solution is making waves in the Netherlands this year. Hundreds of poor children are brought together in a large hall. They are under the care of a single teacher who uses student monitors. These are trained piecemeal, and then, step by step, they in turn train younger children placed under their care. The whole thing is strongly reminiscent of the manufactories and weaving mills where the head overseer issues orders to under-overseer, who in turn supervise the workers' work. Joseph Lancaster praises his method with the words *Qui docet discit*, who teaches, learns. And that is what Jean-Jacques and Élise are talking about. Of course, they know from their experience with the School House and the *Bruges Study Circle* that there is a close interplay between reading, learning, acquiring knowledge, and sharing it. Even with the salonnières, this interplay is visible, provided there aren't too many vain figures present who only want to hear themselves speak and use others as a sounding board. Jean-Jacques and Élise wonder whether with this method, which apparently serves primarily to provide a basic education to enormous groups of children in a short time, *he who teaches learns* is not a misleading slogan. They envision a kind of pyramid where, admittedly, some child monitors might learn something by passing on what they themselves have learned to

others. But this is not a general learning process in which children are introduced to science, art, literature, and whatever else is part of the cultural world of those who were not born poor. They find it suspicious that precisely at the moment when wealthy traders and property owners are increasingly driving the poor working for them towards central production centers, a similar model is emerging for the education of the poor. Does the rich not learn thanks to the *He who teaches, learns* principle? Or would this principle be interpreted differently for the wealthy? The slogan may sound appealing to Enlightenment followers, but is it really the intention to have all poor children become monitors to help them learn better? Or is it about the mystification we also observe elsewhere? Consider the arguments for learning to read by spelling or using phonics methods. But, says Jean-Jacques, also consider the way in which many who adhere to Enlightenment ideas find compelling arguments to demonstrate that Black people and slaves are not actually of the same descent as white Europeans, and thus often interpret quite freely the human rights that many now discuss. Pieter Paulus was very clear on this point in his *'Verhandeling over de vraag "in welken zin kunnen de mensen gezegd worden gelijk te zijn? En welke rechten en plichten die daaruit voortvloeien [Treatise on the question "In what sense can men be said to be equal? And what rights and duties flow from that?"]'*. He published the treatise in 1793. Who still remembers this apostle of freedom, as he was called, who died three years later? When Jean-Jacques talks about him at one of the meetings of the *Bruges Study Circle*, Élise suggests the reading of his treatise.

Jean-Jacques recalls two passages he reads: '*But from the previously laid grounds of equality of human rights and duties it follows that no practice can take place more inconsistent with it, more violent, more shameful, and more dishonouring to humanity than that which, especially since the discovery of the New World, has not only become very common, but has even become a branch of trade and money-making among the most civilised nations of Europe — I mean THE SLAVE TRADE! This word, or this designation of the thing meant, should, I think, be more than sufficient for any man who has thus far been willing to read this treatise with any attention, to fill his heart, where humanity still dwells, with emotion for the one part of mankind, and with indignation for the other: when he considers and ponders the bitter and pitiful suffering of the one part, and the violence and dishonourable injustice inflicted upon it by the other part; and when he adds to this all the other horrors that are inseparably linked to this shameful and destructive trade.*' Pieter Paulus then uses Benjamin Sigismond Frossard's descriptions of the way the Europeans or the Negro traders operate on their orders and the consequences of this for enslaved peoples to say: '*But as striking as this depiction of the misery of these captive and sold people may be, the manner in which they are usually captured, or the means employed to that end, are such that I actually doubt whether it is possible to perpetrate a greater chain of horrors and inhumanities than that employed by us Christians, to deprive the wretched inhabitants of Guinea, otherwise considered among the most fortunate inhabitants of the earth, of their homeland, their friends, relatives, and families, and to make them fall into the snares that*

are laid on their good faith, or on their strength and fortitude, on such occasions, ruthlessly, and as if there were no God to observe human actions..'.

Those in power continue to think differently, even in France. Quietly, the old propertied class is adapting. Families are regaining possessions and resuming their work. Even the church is gaining more leeway after Napoleon and Pope Pius VII sign the Concordat of 1801. In the subsequent encyclical *Church of Christ* the Pope recognises the French Republic, which, in turn, declares Catholicism the religion of the majority. The abolition of slavery is no longer mentioned. Human rights are clearly deteriorating again. A law from 1802 replaces the law of 1794 that had prohibited slavery and allows the keeping of slaves again. Abbot Jean-Baptiste Grégoire, who studied with both the Grammar School of Port Royal and with the Jesuits, criticises this law, which makes him unpopular among the colonists and slave drivers. He accuses the legislature of re-establishing inequality. He joins a group of liberal thinkers in questioning the scientific theories that advocate different human races, categorise them hierarchically, and simultaneously proclaim that the superior beings were tasked with civilising the others.

In short, given what Jean-Jacques knows about the use of fallacies by those belonging to the upper classes, he seriously doubts Lancaster's stated intentions. According to him, the same mechanisms are at play here, whether they are controlled by the First, Second, or even Third Estate. Just like slaves and non-European peoples, children are not truly considered human beings with the same rights as those who claim to care for them.

They are also subject to a host of obligations.
The discussion is not only about the right every child has to learn to read and write, but also about the place they occupy in society. Friends and acquaintances who belong to the *Bruges Study Circle* often speak about child labour in the central workshops, the *'fabriques'* which is even harder than what they're forced to endure within the family. The fisherman's son who goes out to sea with them or the farm labourer's children who help out at home are better off, despite everything, than the children who work for very little pay for a boss they don't know personally. They usually work just as long as adults, and their work is often dangerous. They perform tasks that adults aren't agile or dexterous enough for. On top of that, they're subjected to strict discipline.
Yet, the improvements in education remain a hot topic. You could, of course, rightly wonder who this education is meant for, Élise thinks. Their fourteen-year-old son Lodewijk surely has a better life than many boys his age, although he often complains bitterly and prefers to spend his time with his grandparents. Élise's thoughts drift to her son in Oostende. Will Madeleine succeed in her plan to teach him French? He already speaks decent English, as well as German. And Flemish, of course.
You could say that the Schoolhouse here too is ahead of its time. Even before the decree of 15 Messidor Year VI (1798) came into effect, learning French was possible here. Officially, there are now small schools or primary schools required in all towns with more than 300 inhabitants. Two more schools should be added in Oostende, and six in Bruges.

Now that we are writing year X (ten), it is said that besides Madeleine, five other teachers in Oostende give private lessons in reading and writing in French. English is still available in Ostend, which is useful for those who want to go to sea. Boudewijn and Gertrude have sporadic contact with these language teachers and sometimes exchange books.

In the United States, Thomas Jefferson succeeds John Adams as president, but this changes little in the relationship between those states and France. Quite the opposite. Adams is still president when the unilateral cancellation of French debts is confirmed with the Treaty of Mortefontaine, co-signed by General Napoleon Bonaparte's brother. Moreover, when the French fleet is lost in the Caribbean, Napoleon sells all of Louisiana to the United States. Young Louis Lemaître asks his father how it is possible that the French are simply selling this land. Few French people live there, and even fewer Americans of European descendants, but according to the travelogues they have, the region is mainly populated by descendants of those who inhabited those lands long before the French occupation. They are apparently not involved in the trade. Jean-Jacques gives Louis some documents to read that defend the existence of different human races. He explains how the hierarchical arrangement makes it natural for arrogant owners to sell their pseudo-property to those who arrogantly wish to remain ignorant of the land's uses by those who lived there before Europeans put it on the map.

Ostend, December 5, 1803
Dear friends Pierre and Marguerite.

It's been a while since I've written to you. Forgive the long silence. It hasn't been very peaceful in our regions, and it hasn't been peaceful in yours either. Since the Directory decided to close the university where you worked, Pierre, no fewer than five mayors have come and gone. The city is practically deserted. Perhaps Jean-Jacques has told you about it. The Schoolhouse we left in the good hands of Boudewijn and Gertrude is struggling. There's little money. The First Schools generally have fewer children than they could possibly have, partly because many of them don't have time to attend school and have to work for meagre wages. Who could have predicted that the economic situation would deteriorate so much? All of us, in fact, is that not so, dear friends? Almost forty years ago, our families moved to the Austrian Netherlands out of economic necessity. And now we're back living in a French-occupied country — a republic, no less. The decision by the then-Directoire to close the universities has another unfortunate consequence for you. Our mutual grandson will not be going to Leuven, but perhaps to Brussels. He might also simply continue his parents' work. He seems interested in their work and our research related to education for both the wealthy and the less fortunate. We feel truly privileged that our fifteen-year-old grandson occasionally hops on the barge and comes to visit us. We should add that when in Oostende, he spends more time in the library on Keizerskaai than in Kapellestraat. Yes, we decided to leave a large part of the library, which has well grown since my grandparents lived in Oostende, in the Schoolhuis. It is certainly more useful there than if we had moved it to our new home.

All in all, our family has lost a significant portion of its income in recent years but we are still faring much better than many of our fellow city dwellers. The harbour is quiet and deserted, and even major investments haven't been able to prevent this. The

harbour is once again primarily a fishing port, partly due to the cessation of the Trieste Company before the French established themselves here, and partly due to the cessation of exports of materials and weapons for the Americans. Nevertheless, the city's notables continue to work at the Consulate to maintain interest in the port of Oostende. Eighteen months ago, the appointment of Napoleon Bonaparte as first consul was festively announced. It was a way to remind the French administrators of earlier promises regarding the port of Oostende. The fact that there is still a port activity is thanks to the few shipowners and thriving merchants, including our current mayor, who chose to remain here despite the international blockades. They are convinced that aid is not being delivered any faster, largely due to the official reports from the Prefect of the Lys department. Last year, that report also exaggerated the number of ships available on the ground. We understand it mentions 250 merchant ships, 35 fishing boats, and 23 pilot boats, which doesn't correspond to reality at all!

Anyway. Six months ago, the First Consul issued a decree authorising the establishment of a nine-member chamber of commerce with André Van Iseghem, Laurent Solvyns, Alexis Perlau, Georges Vieth, Henri Belleroche, Jacques Serruys, Charles Carpentier, Theodore Van Moorsel, and Auguste Willard. They're trying, but activity remains low. There's, of course, the traffic of shallow-draft coastal vessels to the ports of French Flanders and Nantes. This ensures the supply of high-quality French salt for the fishing industry. Our local shipowners also send vessels to the Mediterranean and even occasionally to the West Indies.

This summer, Napoleon Bonaparte was in Oostende to assess the state of the coast firsthand, we were told. He first arrived in Nieuwpoort, where he was received by Mayor Blankaert and several aldermen and congratulated on his appointment as First

Consul. He supposedly declared that everything he heard was honest talk because Belgians never lie. How could even a great warrior be so naive? And between us, it now appears that the First Consul, despite the new departments of Leie, Scheldt, Jemappes, Deux-Nèthes, Dyle, Sambre-et-Meuse, Nedermaas, Ourthe, and Forests, apparently doesn't consider our region the authentic French Republic, but continues to call it Belgium. After having belonged to Belgium Fœderatum, Belgium Regia, and Belgium Austriacum, is anyone living here now a resident of Belgium Gallica? Are we back to square one? Can we expect a new occupying Caesar or Augustus soon? Anyway, after Nieuwpoort it was Oostende's turn, and our mayor of English descent, received the First Consul with the words: 'Citoyen premier consul, daignez accepter les clefs de la ville d'Ostende. Si son état ne lui a pas permis de vous fournir une grande armée, vous ne dédaignerez pas sans doute celle de la deputation du Conseil Municipal et des principaux négociants que j'ai l'honneur de vous présenter et de mettre à votre disposition. Placés près de vous, ils vous entretiendront des sentiments de mes compatriotes, et vous vous convaincrez, Citoyen Premier Consul, que les nouveaux Français ne le cedent pas aux anciens dans l'amour et la reconnaissance qui vous sont dus à tant de titres.' And that from the mouth of the Englishman who has washed up here, while his former compatriots are at this very moment wreaking havoc on French and Dutch ships.

Yes, friends, you might laugh at this, but once again, we're worried. When the Austrian dynasty expanded the harbour and turned Oostende into a kind of world port for several decades, the French were the terrible enemy. Ten years is, of course, a long time… in a child's life… Now, it seems as if the occupying French army never caused any bad blood, when literally everything was

requisitioned. No, that gesture of allowing a Chamber of Commerce to stimulate coastal shipping suddenly makes the First Consul a hero. He was so delighted with the reception this summer that he allowed the conversion of the Black Nuns' convent into a weaving mill. And now he's also showing interest in the harbour as a base against the English. That's why he wants to have the tides controlled by a sluice gate. He left the city in July with the promise that engineers would carry out the necessary work to construct a platform for eight guns on the east side of the harbour.

Before leaving the city, the First Consul also visited the troops stationed on what we today call the Camp de Bruges. *All in all, he spent almost four days there, including a review of the manoeuvring troops on the beach near Oostende. Apparently, it was a memorable moment for the recruits of the 51st Line. The young men could tell their families that they had seen the famous Napoleon Bonaparte in flesh and blood.* Camp de Bruges *has been since the end of August a permanent base for three divisions of the Republican Army. You could actually call it Camp d'Oostende, because Oostende is clearly the place from which everything is controlled. Langestraat is currently the French headquarters. Currently, General Davout is the Commander in Chief, and he is also staying in Ostend. Although, "staying" is an overstatement. He regularly visits the ongoing construction work in Dunquerque and Vlissingen. According to his chief of staff, he shows up unexpectedly and keeps everyone on their toes. This isn't always appreciated. He himself says that he rarely knows twenty-four hours in advance where he will be staying, but that he is there where he is needed. Anyone who has interacted with him and other high-ranking officers tells us that the soldiers of the Republican Army are trained to an efficiency unmatched in any royal army. And it is this well-trained army that protects our coast and port from what is to*

come, without anyone knowing exactly what that "what" is. The army's efficiency is said to depend on how manoeuvres are explained to soldiers. Reasoning-based training is preferred over purely instructional training. I heard the following explanation from a colonel involved in the training: "Battalion commanders often have to reason with recruits when instructing them. To make themselves heard, they order the formation to constantly rotate by a quarter, with the advantages of the formation principles clearly demonstrated and explained. Through this method of teaching, soldiers are no longer machines. They identify with our ideas. They sense the goodness of their order and are immeasurably more self-confident, determined, and intelligent when a war situation offers the opportunity to utilise what they have learned in peace. Let us talk a lot with the French soldier." It is truly appalling that leaders acknowledge that reasoning is beneficial for training a killing machine at their disposal, but refuse to acknowledge that this same kind of reasoning would benefit everyone's knowledge and science. Perhaps with more knowledge, more science, war situations could be avoided more efficiently. Perhaps this is where the problem lies. Would those republican aristocrats fear they would become unemployed if reasoning removed the need for war? Meanwhile, class distinctions persist. It's said here that the First Consul actually wanted even the highly ranked officers, just like the soldiers, to stay in the same barracks at the Camp de Bruges. Everyone equal, they supposedly said. But the highest-ranking officers were still entitled to better and more spacious barracks, which in turn cost more... so they are allowed, for financial reasons they say, to be billeted with civilians in the city. Fraternity and equality are good slogans, but apparently difficult to achieve, even in a republican army. And of course, we could philosophise at length about the perception of freedom when more than two people with more than two life

options come together…

Madeleine and I hope you're all doing well over there in Leuven, despite the university's closure. Unfortunately, this isn't the best time to suggest a trip to the North Sea coast. But perhaps calmer times are coming.

Jan Lemaître.

Bruges, January 4, 1804

Dear parents,

It was nice to receive your letter. I didn't know you were still corresponding with Jean-Jacques' parents. The sneaky guy didn't tell me about this. He claims he didn't know either.

Yes, Jan is right about Lodewijk. He regularly works with us at the School House. Jean-Jacques recently jokingly remarked that anyone unfamiliar with us might think we use the small-scale Lancaster method. We ourselves are primarily involved with the Bruges Study Circle, and Lodewijk often takes responsibility for the reading and writing exercises and study work of the children entrusted to us. Lodewijk learns by doing how best to guide the children. And he takes care of his own studies. Over the past two years, he has indeed spent quite a bit of time in Oostende, with Boudewijn and Gertrude and their children, but also in the library on Keizerskaai. He's going to the coast again soon for two months. We suspect he'll probably stick to self-study. We know very little about the Central School of Brussels *and wonder if it's worth letting him go to Brussels. We'll wait and see.*

Apparently, Jan has given you a lot of details about the French presence here in the coastal region, or rather, in the department of the Leie, as our administrators say today. If I'm not mistaken, Leuven, like Brussels, is incorporated into the department of the Dyle? Apparently, the Republicans love natural waterways. That perhaps completes their ode to nature, which we find in their

calendar. I say "they", because all things considered, I see very few people here using the decimal calendar. It's not often necessary, since most people still divide their daily tasks according to light and dark and leave the recording of exact dates and times to those who draw up documents. But I digress. Of course, I don't know what Jan told you all, but I do know that Napoleon also made an impression here in Bruges when he visited last year. The stories seem to me laced with flattery. It's even claimed that the crowd cheered him in French as his carriage passed by and that he was greeted with eloquent French speeches, while the truth is that many of our magistrates barely speak French. Oh well.

What concerns us more is that the entire French occupation, and the way the Consulate presents itself as the liberating administration of our territories, says little about the lives of the working population. Correspondence with other parts of the world is once again proving difficult. We often have to rely on chance encounters with merchants and sailors.

For example, there's now a workbook for those who work for a boss. No workbook, no job. It could, of course, be a way to exercise some control over who can and can't work. But we don't see much change. Children continue to spend long days in workshops. We get the impression that bosses and parents simply don't take last year's workbook law into account. The arrogance of the financial system and the difficulty of surviving are once again going hand in hand. As far as we know, the number of children who are not required to work due to living circumstances is declining, even in our northern neighbours. Schools for the poor and orphans are quickly sending children off to work. So are the parents. A few years ago, we studied Pestalozzi's proposals for schools for the poor. He spoke of the need to teach the poor to cope with their poverty so that they would be happy poor. Then as now, when the republic began to

wave the slogans of equality and freedom, equality never means equality in having the means to live. And how can you achieve equality if some have the time and money to read, study, eat properly, and dress properly, while others don't? No, dear parents, the proclaimed equality they claim to be striving for is still for a limited group, and it relies on the labour of the largest group. We often talk about it, but we don't know how to truly change this. On our very limited scale, we continue, just as we do on Keizerskaai, to provide reading and thinking time for those who usually don't have the means to pay for it. But we can hardly buy off working time from those who work up to 18 old hours or 7.5 decimal hours per day. However you calculate the hours, many workers have only a quarter of the day to rest, eat, and sleep. We can only show admiration for the children and adults among the Bruges poor who come to visit us on Sundays at the Study Circle with the desire to read and learn. Often, that doesn't make them any happier. We're truly doing the Pestalozzi followers a disservice. Our visitors are indeed thinking more about the unequal equality.

Dear parents, we believe that the republican adventure we are experiencing today will not bring as much renewal as the enthusiastic supporters of the Consulate, and especially of the First Consul, are leading us to believe. Who is pulling the wool over whose eyes?

Perhaps you've heard about the purchase of Louisiana by the United States government. Louis asked his father about it. We heard from those who were there that the new president, Thomas Jefferson, originally only wanted to buy the city of Nouvelle-Orléans from the French. Perhaps this is the new way of warfare. A city is no longer besieged, but simply bought. Jefferson's ideas about territorial expansion are just as peculiar as those about education back in Virginia. Perhaps buying a city causes less

suffering than its siege, but isn't that the height of the arrogance of the owners? We have more resources than you, so we simply buy the city land and its inhabitants. No one asks the inhabitants if they want to be sold. That kind of thing probably only occurs to those who consider it normal that one can also buy and sell Black slaves, don't you think? But the seller himself had some crazy ideas too. At first, the Consulate refused to consider the entire sale, but then, suddenly, the sale to the American government encompassed not just New Orleans but the entire Louisiana territory. That's an area larger than the entire United States combined. And the buyer accepted. After some further back and forth, 60 million French francs were paid to France. The asking price was 80 million, but part of that was deducted to compensate for losses caused by French pirates… This seems like a small tulip bulb affair: the French government is selling lands to the American government that it supposedly holds in concession as a result of a secret agreement with the Spanish Royal Family. Speaking of arrogance… The fact that the arrogant French don't mention the original inhabitants of these territories is probably due to the philosophy of enlightened minds who keep talking about different human species. Apparently, even their own expatriates now suddenly belong to a different human species… And the arrogant American in power immediately see the opportunity to further expand colonisation, and thus cotton production as well. This way, they secure the support of the cotton and slave barons against the rising industrial barons in the Northeastern United States. They consider the entire deal illegal and even unconstitutional. Perhaps this whole absurd project is costing them dearly. But I fear that, as is the case throughout history, those who have no say will suffer the most.

Dear parents, in this letter, which I hope reaches you, I let my

emotions guide me. But I do feel somewhat discouraged by the events of recent years in those two republics. It seems that replacing royal houses with elected leaders doesn't change the relationship between the haves and the have-nots. It also seems that arrogance itself simply changes from owner. And I'm not even sure about this: have you noticed how many high-ranking figures of the current French Republic who serve the Consulate are the same ones who previously served the Court? Those who literally lost their heads in the last ten years were the loudmouths on both sides. Those who considered themselves at the very top, either by inheritance or by force of arms, kept their mouths shut and remain at the top.

Yours affectionately Élise

General Davout expresses his concern to Napoleon about the loyalty of the inhabitants of the Leie department to French policy. It is undeniable that there are major trade interests in the entire North Sea region with both England and the Northern Netherlands. At the beginning of Nivôse year XII he says: *I have just discovered a very rich man from these countries who commissioned two individuals from Oostende to go, among other things, to give money to all the English prisoners that our convoys bring from Oostende. I hope in eight or ten days to know more and to have learned the necessary proof of conviction to unmask, according to all appearances, the head of the English agency in these countries.* You could say it's about helping prisoners, but that's not Davout's opinion, nor is it the opinion of those in power. Just a few months ago, a man was arrested for walking around the military camp near Oostende and asking questions to the common soldiers. The officer in charge stopped him and found English-made pistols on him. That was enough to accuse

him of espionage. Davout received permission to have him executed, not only in the presence of the troops but also of a portion of the Ostend population. In retrospect, the example they wanted to set may have caused even more reluctance among the population, who saw beyond the mere spectacle of executing a man sentenced to death.

This year, spring brings news that surprises some, while others see it as confirmation of what they've suspected for some time. Napoleon Bonaparte receives the title of emperor from the Senate. His ambition to emulate figures from antiquity has been abundantly clear for some time. Anyone who was in Oostende or Bruges, and who is even a little familiar with ancient writings, can't help but think that the peoples of the North today see the warriors of Paris appearing just as they saw the warriors of Rome appear almost 2,000 years ago. For Jan and Madeleine, there are other signs, however. The Consulate is the result of intrigues by high-ranking state figures. They installed a Senate, just as in Rome, and the equivalent of the triumvirate consists of three figures. Now that the Senate grants the First Consul the title of Emperor, it will probably not be long before Paris has a dictator, also modeled on the Roman model…

Meanwhile, the newly appointed emperor is finally able to give legal character to a project that had already begun in 1793. The general written jurisdiction is given the name *Code Civil*. You could also consider this a Parisian version of its Roman predecessors.

The turbulent years between 1793 and the establishment of the Consulate and the Senate delayed this project. In recent years,

several parts had already been published, making them legally effective, but now there is a general legal framework. The *Bruges Study Circle* often debates about it and it is already clear that from now on, justice will be administered based on written provisions and not on custom. According to Jean-Jacques, this makes the law less fickle and less dependent on personal opinions. For other members of the *Circle* including the Greysel family, it is a document that was pushed through by someone who seized power through military violence. And the women who are part of the *Study circle* immediately demonstrate that women are now sidelined not only by custom but also by law. As soon as a woman marries, she is subordinate to the man who receives the title of head of the household. Élise notes that the result of such an attitude, based on Roman law, may be to perpetuate Greek customs. Women have a greater opportunity to acquire knowledge, science, and literary culture by remaining unmarried or, as was and likely still is the case among the aristocracy, by entering into marriages of convenience. They secure the inheritance and, in return, receive the means to lead a more or less independent life, both in terms of acquiring knowledge and in lovemaking.

The military activities and the fortification of the camp on the east side of the Ostend harbour channel are now more visible. At low tide, troop exercises regularly take place on the beach, and some of the city's residents are clearly interested. The French officers are well aware that among these onlookers there might be English spies. Thanks to the historical ties and the geographical location, they can easily find shelter in Oostende.

This sometimes makes the atmosphere somewhat grimmer, although the onlookers are often just young people who want to see the soldiers, to jokingly imitate them and also to provoke them a bit. But teasing unskilled recruits can be dangerous, and shots are often fired in the direction of the young tormentors. Thus, disaster strikes the Lemaître family on a beautiful June day. Lodewijk is visiting his grandparents. He usually spends part of the day in the library on Keizerskaai with the boys from Boudewijn and Gertrude's, with whom he gets along well. One afternoon, they decide to head into town together towards the harbour channel. There, they meet some buddies of Lodewijk's friends. Those suggest rowing across the harbour channel to watch some soldiering. The others hesitate, but it's agreed to stay in the dunes, a safe distance from the troop exercises. They walk into the dunes and lie down in a pan, taking turns watching the beach activities. Apparently, the beautiful weather has brought out a large crowd, and the provocative remarks towards a dozen clumsy recruits continue. At one point, those get so fed up with the teasing that they fire shots in the direction of the spectators. Two boys pretend to be hit and fall to the sand, screaming. From a distance, it looks very real. Several bystanders think so too, walking menacingly towards the man who just emptied his musket. The recruits panic and run into the dunes, followed by other soldiers from their battalion. They pass the dune hollow where, surprised by this unexpected development, Lodewijk and his friends had taken shelter. When the retreating soldiers spot the boys, they think they are dealing with English spies and fire shots in turn. Lodewijk feels a sharp

pain in his chest and collapses into the arms of one of his friends. The others raise their arms and shout loudly “Stop! Stop!” The entire group is taken to the camp, where the officer on duty interrogates them. When he looks at the unconscious boy and hears the name Lemaître, he asks if the boy is related to the teachers of the school on Keizerskaai. The Van Heurck brothers explain in proper French that he is the grandson of Jan Lemaître and that their parents now run the Schoolhouse. The officer exclaims in disbelief: “So you must be the sons of Baldwin and Gertrude!”, after which he introduces himself as François Picard. Immediately afterward, he expresses deep regret for the stupid accident. Meanwhile, an army doctor has revived Lodewijk and examined him. He finds a large flesh wound on his right side, and the bullet has apparently entered between two ribs and the muscles of his chest. As far as the doctor can see, the lung hasn’t been hit as there’s no trace of blood in the boy’s mouth, throat, or nose. He cleans the wound and applies a bandage. He warns that a high fever is likely approaching and that it would be best to take the boy to his grandparents. François writes a safe conduct for the boys and orders four soldiers to escort them. They carry Lodewijk on a bunk to the harbour channel and then onto the boat. On the west side, they return by bunk to Kapellestraat. François also wrote a hasty note to Jan and Madeleine announcing that he would personally arrange for the boy to be seen by a doctor and that he would visit them as soon as his regimental colonel gave him leave to do so.

When the small procession arrives at Jan and Madeleine’s, the

grandparents are deeply dejected. François' letter only offers them a little reassurance. They put the boy to bed and offer the four soldiers a light supper before returning to their camp. The friends leave. A few hours later, Boudewijn and Gertrude arrive shocked by the afternoon's events. They spend a frightening night, especially when Louis develops a fever in the morning. That morning, the friends have barely left the house when a doctor arrives, commissioned by François Picard. He explains that he comes from the camp to the city every two days to visit the military hospital on Ooststraat and that he will visit Louis on the way there or back for as long as necessary. He shows how to change the bandages around Louis' side and how to wash the wound with boiled water and then cover it with honey. The doctor then takes out a glass jar of honey, given to him by François himself, he says. It's good liquid honey from France.

A few weeks later, François and Jan leave together *Hotel du Commerce* where they attended a lecture in the *Societé Littéraire.* They stroll leisurely into Kapellestraat. Jan asks François if he has time to come in. He nods and says he'll be spending the night in Langestraat. Together they enter the living room. Lodewijk is drinking tea with Madeleine. They greet each other warmly. François reiterates his relief that Lodewijk has almost fully recovered. However, he doesn't hesitate to point out to the young man once again how unwise it is to observe military exercises. There is considerable nervousness among Napoleon's generals about the English spies. François reminds him that General Davout had already ordered public executions, including in Oostende.

Madeleine turns the conversation to the recently appointed First Consul. François confirms that there will be a coronation ceremony before the end of the year. He tells his friends that when Louis was struck by that cursed bullet, preparations were underway for the Emperor's visit to the *Camp de Bruges* to personally assess the progress of its installation. And he did indeed stop by a few days ago, hence the general relaxation this week. Everything had gone well. The emperor had inspected the 25,000 troops. He seemed delighted with how many soldiers were spending their free time creating flower gardens. Madeleine sadly remarked that it would be so much better if he had an army of permanent gardeners instead of an army trained for future wars. But Napoleon's whole person exudes arrogance and a lust for power, and he already has an impressive history of wars and battles. Why should that change now?

It's also no state secret, Jan adds, that the current kings, just like the old French nobility, will never recognise the title the Senate granted to Napoleon. François believes the planned coronation ceremony is related to this: in the new emperor's inner circle, it's said that Napoleon Bonaparte wants to make a good impression. He has even invited the Pope to the planned coronation ceremony, but whether he will be able to convince anyone other than himself and his immediate circle that he is ushering in a new dynasty of rulers remains highly questionable.

The friends then returned to the lecture Jan and François attended that evening. Both men explained that it primarily focused on the continuation of Lavoisier's work, a topic even French may take up again. In England, Humphry Davy is

conducting some interesting research. He decided to dedicate himself entirely to chemistry after reading Lavoisier. Today's lecture was about his experiments with nitrous oxide. This gas is useful as a painkiller or even as an anaesthetic. There's interest in it among army doctors. The gas can also be dangerous and must therefore be used where it's needed. The moral conclusion of the lecture was that this would benefit the fairs and the special *tea-parties* in aristocratic circles. Furthermore, as a soldier, François was also interested in the light sensitivity of silver nitrate and Davy's experiments with the solar microscope. With this, he succeeded in magnifying images using light.
While François and Jan recount the lecture they attended, George Riebau's apprentice, Michael Faraday, finishes his day's work on Blandford Street in London. Today he has been preparing leather. He has just begun his apprenticeship as a bookbinder…

Finally, the time has come. Louis can return home. Although he has been declared cured, Élise prefers not to let him make the journey to Bruges alone. She asks Hanne Greysel, who often helps out at the Bruges Schoolhouse for to travel to Oostende by barge and accompany Louis home on the return trip. Jean-Jacques suspects Élise of playing matchmaker, but she looks at him with wide innocent eyes and tells him that's not the case at all.
It's clear to everyone that after Lodewijk's return, Hanne frequently visits him on Sundays. For a while, she walks by before Sunday Mass, but later only shows up after Mass. Lodewijk tells his mother that Hanne tried to persuade him to accompany her on her church visits. He politely but firmly

declined. That's why Hanne now comes after Mass or lunch. The young people ask their parents for permission to walk along the canals, the Katelijnevest, and near the landing stages for the barges to Ghent and Oostende whenever weather permits. They often spend the afternoon there with Hanne's brothers, accompanied by an aunt.

Now that pressure is mounting in many places to make small schools, often called primary or first schools, accessible to all children, there is increasing talk of introducing compulsory school attendance. This is already the case in some parts of the Low Countries, the Holy Roman Empire, and Austria, usually at the initiative of local authorities.

Jean-Jacques collects information about the school for everyone, including children who do not belong to the aristocracy or wealthy bourgeoisie. He wants to update what his father and grandfather already had on the subject. One of his concerns is the way in which what he had already described as the *Lancaster instruction factory* is increasingly being presented openly as an adequate organisational structure, primarily to reduce costs. What initially seemed like an attempt to subject children to the same instruction, placed in well-defined groups in the classrooms, is now clearly a conscious choice of making *cohorts* to which some give the name *units* or *classes* where each *cohort* is under the care of a carefully selected monitor. According to Jean-Jacques, the Lancaster model aims to provide the children of the population working in 'the fabriques' a mandatory instruction in a precise cadence. In such a cohort, they are no more than an object, just like their parents are in

their workplace. The *primary school* where the secular government determines the curriculum is just an industrial version of the *little school* where the church usually sets the curriculum. For the common children, this is the only possible school almost everywhere. Lancaster received the support of Lord Somerville and the Duke of Bedford and wrote enthusiastically to colleagues and interested parties about the growth of his own school: '*The enlargement of my School from three hundred and fifty to nearly eight hundred children in the space of six weeks, and the establishment of a similar School for two hundred girls, clearly proved that by my school and system of teaching, one thousand children and more could be schooled without the aid of any adult assistant teacher.*.' Also when it comes to instructing children, the arrogance driven by the pursuit of profit will only increase the general ignorance, Jean-Jacques believes.

A few months later in Oostende, François Picard visits Jan and Madeleine. Jan has been struggling with his health since last winter and suffers from frequent coughing fits. He prefers to stay home and limits his visits to his small circle of friends. François is emotional. He suspects this is his last visit before leaving for good, and it might well be the last time he sits in the living room with this peculiar teacher.

"I've always considered your Schoolhouse one of the most remarkable places I've ever visited," François begins. "Your involvement with the children and their families is something I've never seen anywhere I've been stationed as I've told you before. I spoke about it with my parents two years ago when I

visited them during a short leave, and they mentioned their parents' meetings at yours. Now I know your son has built a similar circle in Bruges. Your whole family is very committed to the idea of sharing knowledge and scholarship."

"For spreading knowledge and science is the main condition for everyone to be able to contribute… Well, it seems very likely that our concern is passed down from generation to generation. I think that Jean-Jacques and Élise's study circle doesn't quite have the same foundation as my parents'. My parents brought the salon-keeping from Paris to Lille. I think that Jean-Jacques and Élise are trying to experiment with the cosmopolitan idea in Bruges with a circle of people from different backgrounds. A kind of miniature *Res Publica Litteraria* although more *Oratoria* than *Literaria* if I may allow myself the pun. And that's apparently necessary in times when enlightened ideas are slowly coming under pressure again from those who are seizing power.

François ponders what his friend is saying for a moment. He thinks he's never met anyone who thinks so much about how arrogant attitudes hinder human development in general and how those attitudes repeatedly give ignorance the upper hand. Someone who isn't arrogant at all, but rather humble, and who, in a small corner of the globe, along with a few like-minded people, teaches groups of children to think without worrying about the impact of this local adventure. He remembers Jan once saying that if their work helps some of the children they've been working with demonstrate, once they're adults, that they possess an inquisitive and tolerant mind, then their work is meaningful. And that he could never be certain about this.

François takes the hint and says: “Well, you could hardly expect that someone who worked his way up in the army by using Jacobin ideas, then denies them, and with military display helps push through yet another new constitution, pushing aside those who invited him to do so to become the protagonist himself, and moreover, making Roman and Frankish emperors his role models, wouldn’t ultimately become emperor himself. Of course, that Senate proposal of March last year was his own, and it was already clear then that there would be a coronation. You could call all of this boyish pranks if that whole seizure of power hadn’t caused so much suffering to so many people. France’s war capacity serves the Emperor, that’s clear. But Jan, we’ve known for a long time that under the yoke of the First and Second Estates, no dream of universal equality could be realised. Only those who have time to think about people and the relationships between people have been able to do so, unfortunately. And even among them, most of them think only for their own group and, very briefly, for others whom they assume don’t have time to think for themselves. That is the reason for that maddening situation you yourselves so often talk about, where the poor here and slaves elsewhere are not part of humanity as many great thinkers conceptualize it that way. Perhaps many emperors will have to come and go, perhaps we will invent or reinvent other forms of government before we can work on a form of cosmopolitanism that doesn’t depend on just one philosophy of life.

François then says that the Bruges camp would soon be evacuated. Empire Marshal General Davout simply announced

that preparations are being made for a rapid relocation of the entire camp.
”Is Davout all three of those?” Jan asks with a wistful smile. “Another one who has made his way from the old small aristocracy to the new aristocracy, thanks to Republican France. Or should I say, who is making his way?”
“Only the future will tell what his path will be, my dear friend. And now I fear *our* paths diverge here. In a few days, I’ll be leaving with my men for the Rhine region, though I don’t know exactly where yet. I don’t expect ever to return to Oostende on duty.”
“So you won’t see the improvement works to the harbour or the construction of the *Spuikom* and *Spui Lock*, which the newly appointed Emperor has just given permission for,” Jan notes.
After François says goodbye to the others present, he and Jan embrace. Both men have tears in their eyes as they part. They instinctively sense that the end is near for both of them.

After the *Camp de Bruges* has been completely dismantled, Jan, Karel, Madeleine, and Tiene learn with some surprise that this camp was a small part of a series of interconnected training stations for veterans and recruits, from Boulogne to the Zwin. These camps formed the basis of General Davout’s plan to create a professionally instructed army in two years. The men who lived together during that entire time became disciplined and well-trained soldiers who, thanks to the many exercises, are also in good physical condition. Moreover, all soldiers got to know their superiors and are known to them. This makes it easier for everyone to keep a cool head in threatening situations. People

talk about the Davout method appointing to this invisible fabric, this *esprit de corps* to indicate the manner in which it was assimilated, and to distinguish it from all others. The four friends learn with some astonishment that the General is proud that he has transformed his compatriots, whom he calls a '*warlike race*' into a '*military race*'.

Karel notes that Lancaster could draw inspiration from General Davout. Imagine 800 children learning on command, all saying or doing the same thing at the same time. With three consecutive halls, or classrooms as they're apparently called now, each classroom full of children in the same phase of learning, three teachers and their necessary monitors are enough to instruct all the children of a medium-sized city simultaneously. Whether this would result in a military race, a French race, a docile race, or some other kind of unified race would depend solely on the precise instructions. Madeleine says it's better not to say such things out loud. But Jan argues that such an approach is certainly possible: to achieve this, you only need to combine Lasalle's ideas with Lancaster's proposals.

Tiene then asks: "But will Lancaster's success last?" Jan says: "I don't know what you think about this. I suspect that wherever a government makes a simple cost-benefit analysis of training needed for poor children from the lower classes to become acceptable workers, Lancaster will certainly be successful. That will be the case for a long time and almost everywhere. Look, his school is only just starting to get going and you hear enthusiastic reactions everywhere even in New York. I just heard that the recently founded just *Free School Society* wants to

provide education to needy children who cannot find a place in the church-organised *little schools* in the city. The *Society* clearly announces what she calls her benevolent ambitions in the deed of incorporation: *'Personal attention should be given to these children to improve their morals, and to their parents to assist them in obtaining suitable industrial positions and good habits. To give them the learning capacity necessary for the proper fulfilment of life's duties, the association is confident that the Lancaster model will produce the most beneficial and lasting effects.'*. Moreover, I know from someone who spoke to the chairman of that association that he publicly praised Lancaster as '*the benefactor of the human race*', and its system as '*a blessing sent down from heaven to deliver the poor and distressed of this world from the clutches of dominion and ignorance*'. This just goes to show how superficial people think about the concept of ignorance. I wonder how knowledge and science are defined in this context." Madeleine, who had been silently following the conversation, now interjects: "I am firmly convinced that everything must be done to make the Schoolhouse and similar children's schools known to all who want to educate children. And that can only happen if all the people leading such initiatives connect with each other and publicise their work. Lassalle had his entire congregation behind him; Lancaster can rely on those with money and power. Pestalozzi may not be as good a merchant as Lancaster, but he can count on the sympathy of those with enlightened ideas. As far as we know from our friends in the Helvetic Republic, he was supposedly a member of the *Order of the Perfectibles* until that order was banned by the Elector of

Bavaria. Now he is an honorary citizen of France, which apparently makes him suspect in his own region, but…

"Don't forget what you're going to say," Karel interrupts Madeleine, "but the Helvetic Republic has officially been incorporated into the Confederation of the 19 Cantons. The former Confederation of the 13 Cantons thus has on paper regained some independence from occupying France, but it remains a vassal state. That is perhaps why Pestalozzi's honorary citizenship seems a bit suspicious."

"Exactly, Karel, the map of Europe is being rapidly redrawn these days. But what I wanted to say is that as soon as central schools open where one can learn the profession of teacher — and I think that shall happen soon now — then those schools will teach the kind of methods that those in power prefer. I suspect that Lancaster and Pestalozzi will be among them. And perhaps Lasalle too, despite the religious-Catholic content. Furthermore, I am firmly convinced that our approach will ***not*** be part of what shall be learned. So we must support all the Boudewijns and Gertrudes, all the Élises and Jean-Jacques as much as possible. Personally, I would be delighted if a sequel were written to what the Magister-Lemaître dynasty already published, and if the free spirits involved in childrearing could continue to exchange ideas among themselves.

Tiene then says: "We recently had a long conversation with Boudewijn and Gertrude about arrogance and ignorance, during which we carefully reviewed your essay, Jan, in which you elaborate on what your grandparents compiled when they made the connection between arrogance and ignorance. That essay is

only circulated in very limited circles, but we think it's a great help in reflecting on the difference between instruction and upbringing."

They then interrupt the conversation because Jan has a violent coughing fit just as he's about to interject. When he's finally able to speak again, he says in a broken, hoarse voice: "I think my grandparents and those who worked with them, but also my parents, with their salon experiences in Lille, have contributed in a very small way to the educational structure where relationships between those involved are based on dialogue and not on instruction. This educational structure has always existed and has always been viewed, if not with disdain, then with suspicion by those who wield power or seek power based on the ownership of goods and people, or letters of credit that enable the ownership of goods and people. The more power someone has, the more suspicious they are of this structure. And the more suspicious they are of those who make this structure available to everyone, without regard to origins and status. It's the challenge to those who proclaim themselves gods and have power."

Look how, from the kingdom, yet another empire sprang. This time, it wasn't an elector who was crowned emperor, but a military strategist who worked his way up, exploiting both old and new established orders. In doing so, he makes clear references to past dictators and military commanders-in-chief. But we must not be discouraged, dear friends, and we must continue to hope that others will not be discouraged either.

That winter, news reached Oostende that Napoleon in part thanks to the well-trained army and the so-called Davout

method, had achieved a resounding victory against an alliance of European kings and Electors. This not only meant the defeat of the Austrian monarchs but also weakened the position of the rulers in Prussia, Russia, and England. A few days later, the friends learned that François Picard had died in Austerlitz from wounds sustained during one of the battles. Madeleine later told Jean-Jacques that she hadn't seen Jan weep such bitter tears since his father's death.

He would not long outlive his friend. Jan died in June of the following year, completely exhausted by the lingering illness that had taken hold of his lungs and caused him to suffer increasingly severe coughing fits, often spitting blood. He was buried in the new cemetery, just outside the city gate, near the road to Wijnendale and Torhout. After his death, Madeleine spent more and more of her time in Bruges with Jean-Jacques and Élise. However, she did not sell the house on Kapellestraat. She agreed with Gertrude and Boudewijn's children that they could use the house as they saw fit when Madeleine was away, provided they kept it well maintained. Madeleine paid them a fee for this. They also agreed that upon Madeleine's death, Jean-Jacques and Élise could occupy the house at any time.

The Bruges Study Circle

Years come and go and we end up in December 1814.

Jean-Jacques and Élise devote all their time to the *Study Circle*, and Lodewijk takes care of the Bruges Schoolhouse. He has Hanne' s support and regularly exchanges letters with the sons and daughter of Boudewijn and Gertrude, who joined their

parents at the Schoolhouse on Keizerskaai in Oostende.

On February 12, 1809, Charles Darwin was born, a man of whom much would be said later. That same year, Thomas Jefferson ended his presidential term. He was succeeded by James Madison, like him a slaveholder. Although the scourge of slavery is often discussed, neither the royal families and upper bourgeoisie in Europe, nor republicans in the newly independent parts of the colonised world, want to end it. These promises remain rather vague.

And then, in April 1814, the entire European world seems to change once again. Napoleon Bonaparte is forced into exile. He tries to secure the throne for his descendants, but the allied European royal houses and the French aristocracy place Louis XVIII on the throne as a constitutional monarch.

That same year, the students of the *Polytechnic School* that the change of power could spell the end for their school. One of those students is Auguste Comte, who, meanwhile, shocks his Catholic family when he announces that he no longer wants to hear about religion and that he has completely lost his Catholic faith.

At the beginning of this year, the department of the Lys was incorporated into the General Government of Belgium under French administration. All preparations were made to bring the area under the authority of William I of Orange-Nassau after the peace conference scheduled for May in Paris. But the suffering is not yet over. This department, as well as those of the Scheldt, the Deux-Nèthes, the Dyle, Jemappes, and the Sambre-et-Meuse, remain a conflict zone. The House of Orange-Nassau,

the English, and Austrian royal houses do not want to offend the French royal family too much, but still... France would have to revert to the borders of before 1792 or even 1789. This means uncertainty in the Southern Low Countries. As if this area were an uninhabited no-man's-land, high society is unabashedly talking about creating a buffer zone to serve as a battlefield should new tensions arise between the ruling monarchs. And that buffer zone will almost certainly come under the management of the House of Orange-Nassau…
But for the time being, French law is in effect. Laws have been amended here and there, including those related to the printing press and publishing industry. The introduction to the decree of September 23rd states: '*Whereas under the laws and regulations currently in force on printing and bookselling, freedom of the press has been subject to often arbitrary surveillance,…'.* The legislator is willing to acknowledge that freedom of speech hasn't always been handled correctly in recent years. However, caution remains necessary. *Article 2* holds everyone responsible for what they write or publish and *article 4* expressly prohibits publications that tend to degrade religion or corrupt morals. Jean-Jacques learns that the conservatives Joseph Bogaert and Pieter de Vlieger requested permission to continue printing and publishing. Jean-Jacques subtly notes that neither can be accused of degrading religion or endangering morals. Hanne Greysels bursts out laughing when she hears Jean-Jacques' remark.

Jean-Jacques and Élise further develop the *Bruges Study Circle* into a society that has been weekly meetings for several years now. Several members regularly publish in newspapers and

magazines based on these circle discussions. But even the announced relaxation of freedom of speech doesn't make it any easier to find a publisher to print something that isn't entirely in line with publisher's own views. In recent years, the Circle in which several women like Élise and Hanne play a prominent role, has maintained contact with universities that were not closed under pressure from the French occupation. This is why people often speak of women engaged in scientific research. Jean-Jacques, Élise, Hanne, Lodewijk, and several other members have succeeded in publishing a series of short biographies about women who played a role in the development of science. This takes the form of small brochures funded by an Amsterdam patron. The series includes the lives of Angélique du Coudray, Caroline Herschel, Émilie de Châtelet, Eva Ekeblad, Laura Bassi, Maria Gaetana Agnesi, Maria Sibylla Merian, Maria Winkelmann, Marie-Anne Pierette Paulze, and Mary Wortley Montagu.

The *Bruges Study Circle* often publishes as a collective. This is the case for *Napoleon's thinking soldiers* from 1813, in which the group critically analyses training camps like the Camp de Bruges, based on the information the study circle was able to gather. In that text, the group questions, among other things, to what extent the victories of Austerlitz and Auerstedt can be seen as the victory of the thinking French soldier over the mechanical Prussian soldier. The authors consider this an overly simplistic argument. Aren't victories not also related to tactical decisions made by military commanders on both sides of the battlefield? Such a tactical decision could, of course, involve instruction. But

according to the authors of the *Study circle* the campaigns in Spain and Portugal, and the failed Russian campaign, have shown that even well-trained soldiers can do little to counter the well-thought-out plans of the opposing leadership. Other factors also play a role. For example, the heavy losses of the English armies in Flanders are said to be mainly due to soldiers weakened by illness, sometimes even a quarter of a division's total number of soldiers. The analysis partially reprises the discussion Jan and Karel had at the time when they discussed the "Davout method". Finally, the group compares the budget for soldier instruction with that for children's instruction according to the Lancaster system in the poor school.

In another publication titled *'Education or Instruction: Enlightened Ideas and Their Influence on the Education of Adults and Children, the Bruges Study Circle* debate the hobbyhorse of its founding members. The pamphlet begins with a statement that, according to Napoleon's closest associates, can be attributed to him: "*Les vraies conquêtes sont celles que l'on fait sur l'ignorance!*"
"Strange," the authors write, "considering that during battles Napoleon's armies often destroyed and plundered extensively, and that only a portion of the plunders were moved to emerging public museums. If the ignorant were allowed to participate in the conquests, then it was not certain that ignorance would be overcome." Furthermore, one could argue that the ever-recurring distrust of religions in general, and the Catholic Church in particular, prompted the self-crowned emperor to close and plunder universities. What does the Emperor mean by

ignorance? The absence of knowledge or knowledge that does not fit within his framework? The *Study circle* quotes Goethe. As a cultural ambassador for the Duchy of Weimar, the philosopher is also known as a patron of the University of Jena. When he spoke about his encounter with someone who told him about what he described as "*the pedagogical attitude of the French army",* he said: "*The officers and non-commissioned officers hold a kind of school on Sundays to teach soldiers their duties and provide them with the instruction they need in their current situation. The goal is to develop capable and wise men who have self-confidence."*
After the Battle of Jena, however, all the houses were looted. Goethe's companion Christiane managed to keep their home somewhat spared. And despite, or perhaps thanks to, his meeting with Napoleon in 1808 and he was knighted in the *Legion of Honor*, he returned to those fearful hours in October 1806. With his characteristic sense of humor, he is said to have said: "*It must be concluded that the Great Spirit who stands at their head does not cease to dominate them all and has nothing to fear from the orators*".
In any case, the Sunday school for soldiers in the camps, with officers providing instruction, is also gaining ground in other armies. The *Bruges Study Circle* says it has examples of this not only in other French camps, but also in Prussian and British army camps.
The members of the *Bruges Study Circle* are concerned with the type of education of the illiterate or illiterate soldiers and their children. Army officers can hardly be expected to interpret Sunday school instruction differently from military instruction,

even if they come from enlightened aristocratic families. The instructors do explain, but they do not engage in dialogue. This is evident from the information they have.

In the French military camps, the instruction also had to fulfil another idea characteristic of the French Republic, now the Empire. From the time of the *Constituent Assembly* and later taken over by the *Directory*, the legislator considers the introduction of a single language a prerequisite for a common culture and administration. The authors of the *Study circle* remember that the French have the word *emancipation* at their disposal. It defines a kind of more conscious freedom than the first meaning of not being a slave or a serf. For French policy now, *emancipation* should be the awareness that all local language or dialect is a consequence of the way the kingdom was governed in the past, which meant that knowledge existed only locally and science was spread only in Latin, which was known to a few. Abbé Grégoire goes even further when he says that French is *'the language of freedom'*. But the implantation of this language of freedom is happening in a rather unfortunate way. Everyone remembers how any language other than French was banned in 1806 for the courts and administration, without considering that, for example, in the Southern Netherlands, French was as inaccessible as Latin. To learn the language of science, Comenius would say, everything must be taught to everyone. This implies a school that encourages the diversity of languages, and for the members of the *Bruges Study Circle* that school still doesn't exist.

For the children admitted to orphanages, there is no education

at all, but only compulsory instruction, says the *Study circle*. All information regarding the fate of those in the poorhouses seems to point to a form of forced recruitment as soldiers in Napoleon's armies. A strange form of personal freedom, Jean-Jacques observes in a paragraph he wrote.

The text also discusses the rise of the Lancaster School, not only in England but also in other places where people wanted to expand education for the poor at a low cost. The authors mention the book *The Cottagers of Glenburnie*, which Elisabeth Hamilton published some five or six years ago. In it, village teacher Mrs. Mason is urged to reform the school and employ monitors. David Manson's school serves as an example: *'he calls it his play school, whose rules are so excellent that each pupil never feels that he has to learn, but always considers himself as one who helps the master in teaching others'*. Elisabeth Hamilton says she does not want to detract from Lancaster's reforms, but that his system only represents an increase in scale of what his predecessor Manson achieved with extraordinary talent in a limited atmosphere. The *Bruges Study Circle* on the other hand, thinks the cooperative system of '*sensory, logical and child-oriented*' education based on rewards is preferred to be kept separate from Lancaster's draconian discipline. Manson is described as someone who introduces the ideas of Rousseau and Locke into the school, and Lancaster certainly does not do that. Furthermore, Elisabeth Hamilton does not want to undermine Lancaster's reform ideas, writes the *Study circle*, but precisely because of this she consciously or unconsciously undermines some of David Manson's ideas, such as co-education. *Cottagers*

boys and girls are separated again and, according to the main characters of the book, this mainly has to do with the type of homework that is different for both sexes.

After that the *Study circle* refers William Drennan. Inspired by Hamilton and Manson, he lays the foundation stone for what will become *Drennan's Academical Institution*. Also Frederick Street in Belfast gets a mention where the same year a Lancastrian School is opened '*for the children of the lower classes*' as Joseph Lancaster himself says during his visit to Belfast. He reiterates that his method of students mentoring other students is a money-saving '*mechanical system of education where more than a thousand children can be controlled by only one master at a cost reduced to five shillings per year*'. Lancaster would reject corporal punishment but not a disciplinary system. But the *Bruges Study Circle* recalls Lancaster refuses to hear about a play school. He advocates for a strict disciplinary approach where children can be beaten, if not humiliated.

Whoever who reads the booklet of the *Bruges Study Circle* understands that the last word on this system for the poor has not yet been written. But the final chapter addresses another *taboo*, to use a word James Cook brought back from his travels and heard from the Tongan people when they want to mention something that is actually not allowed to be discussed. It seems the appropriate word when slavery is brought up. After all, playing with words is a common phenomenon throughout Europe. Since 1802, this has been a matter of government activity, especially in the French Republic. Napoleon legalised slavery again. All in all, the facts are simple. Those who own

property overseas, or invest there, want to increase their wealth at the expense of keeping others poor. If that means they have to be slaves, so be it. The *Bruges Study Circle* raises the debates about the economic benefits of keeping and breeding slaves *versus* the importation of captured black people from Africa. Owners continue to speak as if it were not about people but about livestock. The authors carefully review the text of Abbot Grégoire *De la littérature des nègres, manifeste contre le rétablissement de l'esclavage et de la traite négrière'*. That whole movement of the *Society of Friends of the Blacks* sounds quite paternalistic, of course. And it seems the *Bruges Study Circle* especially clear that those who still defend freedom and equality as the highest human values do not consider these rights as universal for those who are not well-off, whether white poor wage labourers or non-white slaves. The *Study circle* starts from the same position as Grégoire, namely that the human race is only one. Grégoire thus connects human rights to the evangelical message, thereby refuting deistic ideas such as those of Voltaire. But the *Bruges Study Circle* takes the position that, as with all living beings, including humans, diversity is a fact both biologically and culturally and that this in no way affects the human condition. The authors of the *Study circle* react sharply to the ugly accusation that Grégoire is *negrophilic.* Colonialists like to use this word as a slur for those who stand up for Black people. Grégoire's book is widely praised in England, the Netherlands, and the Germanic duchies and kingdoms. And that is important, argues the *study circle,* because in those countries too, the rulers and owners often maintain relations with their

own colonies or with colonies of others and do not condemn slavery by the band. Meanwhile, the *Study circle* congratulate with the contribution about the life and work of Amo [see *Publications that run out of control*] in chapter 8 of *De la littérature des nègres,* and Abbot Grégoire's remark that '*the University of Wittenberg did not have the absurd prejudices of so many men who claim to be enlightened*' regarding the difference in skin color. It does seem so, conclude the authors of the *Study circle*, that almost a hundred years ago that university was not only far ahead of the "enlightened men" of that time in the Paris Salons, but still remains so in relation to those who continue to preach human rights and equality with such conviction, whether it concerns a collective, a triumvirate, an emperor or a constitutional monarch.

The *Bruges Study Circle* is currently experiencing some intense debates since one of its members, a physician, frequently brings up the work of his colleague Johann Christian Reil. For a good five years, Reil has been writing regularly about the medical treatment of the soul, where he uses the term "psychiatry". The discussion, of course, is about how to treat the soul. Should it be treated from a medical standpoint, a religious standpoint, or both? And, of course, the soul can be viewed from both moral and educational perspectives.

Jean-Jacques and Élise, along with Élise's parents, followed the evolution of the Central Schools. In 1811, they heard that Karel Van Hulthem, a native of Ghent who had previously studied with Jan Pieter Minckelers in Leuven, had succeeded Santander as librarian at the Central School of Brussels. As Élise's father

knew, he was also the librarian at the Central School of Ghent. Jean-Jacques remembers Karel as someone who was interested in just about everything. He knows that the man had always harboured the desire to amass a vast personal collection of books. So Karel seems to still combine the useful with the pleasant, as Jean-Jacques tells Élise. Indeed, he had strived to work and travel his entire life in pursuit of his passion, regularly moving in the higher spheres of power, before the French occupation, during that occupation, and even now, as the administration of the departments of the Southern Low Countries gradually falls under the Dutch crown. Jean-Jacques remembers the enthusiastic Karel when he met him fifteen years ago. He had succeeded in saving Baudeloo Abbey from the sad fate of being converted into a weaving or spinning mill. The Central School of Ghent was established there after the abbey had served as a temple of reason. But he was especially enthusiastic about the library and the herb garden then under construction in the park of the former monastery.

Jean-Jacques brings it up in the *Bruges Study Circle* what in turn leads to a series of conversations about the changes throughout the region and in the cities from 1791 to the present day. The French occupation caused widespread destruction, and many works of art disappeared, especially from churches and abbeys, of course. Abbeys everywhere were closed and sometimes converted into temples of reason. But often the vacant land was occupied by industrialists who established their central workshops there. Weaving mills, spinning mills, cotton and linen producers, and tobacco factories sprang up everywhere.

Someone is talking about the development of Oostende, especially after the *Camp de Bruges*. The French sluice gate and accompanying basin were constructed between 1806 and 1811. Since 1810, there has been increased port activity. Consider, for example, the rope-making industry. The emperor visited the city several times, which influenced the reinforcement of the ramparts and the improved protection of the harbour. In 1810, he ordered the construction of a large fort to protect the entire harbour and city. Meanwhile, a smaller fort was completed on the west side of Oostende in 1812. It is sadly ironic that the construction of the eastern fort was essentially slave labour. Anyone who visited Oostende during that period will remember the large group of Spanish prisoners of war working on the construction of Imperial Fort. The fort has been completed and manned since the summer of last year, but the emperor is in exile on the island of Elba. In any case, Napoleon's various visits have once again made Oostende a city of growing interest. Charles Delmotte is currently mayor and he seems very keen to present the city favourably to the Prince of Orange.

Bruges hasn't been so fortunate during the past twenty years. Merchants had long wanted a new waterway to the sea since the Zwin had silted up hopelessly. A canal to Sluis would have been a solution. But Bruges benefited less from Napoleon's various visits, who, as early as 1803, expressed his interest in connecting Bruges not to the Zwin, but to the Scheldt estuary. Friends from Sluis recalled a few years ago that after the Battle of Austerlitz, Napoleon granted his General Van Damme the right to reclaim land south and north of the Zwin. This has

caused considerable discontent throughout the region. It appears that the remaining inlet towards Sluis will silt up further and, moreover, become private property. Finally, four years ago, work began on the canal towards Breskens, but it doesn't look like Bruges will soon have a connection to the sea other than the one along the canal to the Oostend harbour channel.
So, wait and see.

The rise of the physical sciences is another topic of discussion in the *Bruges Study Circle*. There is much interest in information about a new machine that would not run on steam but on internal ignition and combustion. The inventors Joseph and Claude Niépce gave it the name *Pyréolophore* and tried to win a competition organised by Napoleon's government to improve the water pump at the Palace of Versailles with this invention. They also had plans to provide a boat with enough energy to sail up the Saône River against the current. Their invention was defeated by an improved steam engine, but both brothers continued to experiment with *controlled dust explosion of various experimental fuels containing mixtures of Lycopodium spores, finely ground coal dust, and resin*, according to one of the descriptions where the *Bruges Study Circle* can lay your hands on.
The Niépce brothers have other inventions to their credit. Currently, they are trying to capture optical images using chemical processes. They are also considering new ways to travel on land. Meanwhile, some members of the *Bruges Study Circle* know François Rivaz patented a hydrogen-powered internal combustion engine. Fuel injection and ignition are

controlled manually. Levers ensure that intake and exhaust valves open and close at the correct time. By pressing a separate button, a voltmeter can generate the electric spark that ignites the hydrogen-air mixture. This causes a piston to rise. A system of pulleys and drums transmits the motion of the falling piston to the front wheels of the *cart* on which the engine is mounted. The *Bruges Study Circle* is aware of the large mechanical tank that Rivaz built last year. It is 6 meters long and has wheels with a diameter of 2 meters. It weighs one thousand kilograms. The fuel mixture consists of approximately 2 liters of marsh gas and 10 to 12 liters of air. During one of the tests, the machine was loaded with 350 kg of logs and stones and a crew of four. The machine climbed a fairly steep 26-meter slope at the speed of a slow-walking man.

During a visit to Keizerskaai, Hanne and Lodewijk hear talk about Michael Faraday, the young assistant of chemist Humphry Davy. They tell his story in the *Circle*. Michael has been employed at the *Royal Institution* for just over a year now on the recommendation of Humphry Davy. Michael received little education as a child and became an apprentice to a bookbinder at a young age. During that training, he attended conferences in London with eminent scholars of the *Royal Institution* and the *Royal Society*. It happened by chance. Michael loved reading the works on chemistry and electricity that passed through his hands. He sometimes talked to the bookbinder's customers about what he was reading. He was particularly enthusiastic about a book by the French salonnière Jane Marcet. One of the customers found Michael's curiosity worthwhile and gave him

tickets to those conferences.
Michael quickly made a great impression on Humphry Davy, who is currently touring Italy with his wife. Michael is accompanying them as an assistant, having previously been in Paris. Boudewijn had the opportunity to attend a lecture by Davy on his way to Paris. Gertrude exchanged a few words with the young assistant and heard him speak admiringly about his employer and mentor. Jean-Jacques believes that Michael Faraday was fortunate not to have ended up in a Lancaster School. He was able to continue developing his interests independently after starting his apprenticeship. Perhaps that is precisely what allowed him to join the *Royal Institution* to be able to work. The *Study circle* speaks about the Schoolhouses and the efforts being made there to encourage children to read and explore what interests them most. Would such a school be possible for everyone? Many members of the *Bruges Study Circle* have doubts. The French Republic and its enlightened minds never envisioned such a school model. This leads to the discussion about who should organize the school for everyone. Certainly not the religious institutions, as history has shown us. Most religious leaders envision a hierarchical school for everyone, with some allowed to learn more than others. But to this day, the school organised by secular power is not of much more interest. Those in power want to have and train workers and soldiers. There is a need for those who must work for the owners. Does the arrogance of ownership make the very idea of the *school for everyone* impossible? Or does it just make impossible the kind of school where everyone can learn as much

as they want, according to their own interests?
Meanwhile, various journals reported on the research of Humphry Davy and his hosts, Volta and Ampère, as well as on their experiments, including those involving the isolation of lead. With Louis Gay-Lussac, Davy proved that diamond is a form of carbon by burning such a stone with a lens in an oxygen-rich environment, thus creating carbon dioxide. Everyone was convinced that much more would be published by and about Davy and Faraday.
Closer to home are also *chemists* at work. In Liège, Jean-Jacques Dony succeeded in extracting zinc from calamine on a large scale by improving the condensers that captured the zinc vapours. He wants to use this to capitalise the concession he had already received from Napoleon in 1806 to operate the calamine mines of Moresnet. While Dony holds the patent for his invention, he lacks the start-up capital to launch the industrial process. François Mosselman, a former supporter of Jan Frans Vonck, hears about Dony and his mining concession. He and his brother Corneille became wealthy through grain trading with both occupying armies, the Austrian and the French one. They obtained their own start-up capital from the lease on collecting waste, manure, and mud in Brussels.
Corneille now owns a large Parisian-style townhouse in Brussels. It is located on the recent *New Grain Market Square.* The former Vonckist couldn't have imagined a better place for his palatial residence.
François settled down a little later. At the time, he had bought the hotel his mistress ran. In 1790, it was known as *Hotel*

*Belgium*It because the Vonckists regularly met there. François has since married the wealthy Marie-Louise Tacqué. Together they own a considerable estates in Antwerp, Liège, and Brussels, where they lived until recently, in Marie-Louise's parents' house. He is currently also banker in Paris, where he bought the bankrupt Recamier's house on Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin. Last year, he proposed to Dony to join forces and link zinc production to mining.

The increasing interest shown by bankers and industrialists in science is not of the same nature as that of those who see science as the enrichment of insight and knowledge. The *Bruges Study Circle* believes that the educators who want to keep poor children happy in their poverty ultimately serve the emerging industrial interests just as much as the other educators who only want to give poor children mass instruction. And the teachers and tutors who are part of the group fear that things will only get worse. They correspond wherever and whenever they can with like-minded professionals. This gives them a picture not hopeful at all. Élise speaks of enslaved children for whom custom-made machines exist because they are fully-fledged workers in the production process. She offers a sharp commentary on the spinning mills that Lieven Bauwens installs in monasteries he bought, which were confiscated by the Napoleonic regime. In those monasteries, there is no room for temples of reason. They are converted into *fabriques* where young and old work long, dangerous hours and earn next to nothing. Élise knows that Lieven's brother Frans wants to increase the profits he can make from child labour by also

making adapted tools for the children in the flax spinning mill.
At the end of 1814 the *Bruges Study Circle* has a new publication. Under the title *The pendulum comes and goes* its members are once again drawing attention to slavery. This is in response to a public letter from Pope Pius VII to the new French monarch, in which he condemns slavery and writes: '*To be in line with moral obligations, religious conscience pushes us to do so; it is this conscience which condemns and disapprove this ignoble trade by which Blacks, not as men, but simply as living things, are taken, bought, sold and squeezed to death by very hard work for an already miserable life*.'
The *Bruges Study Circle* questions whether papal power extends beyond the threat of excommunication or moral condemnation. The Holy Father writes to forbid all clergy and laity to support the Negro trade, as if it were a legal trade. Unfortunately, this will not prevent the arrogant owners from simply continuing the trade. Catholic resistance is easily dismissed. Such resistance comes from those who surrender to mystical powers or simply oppose progress, which demands increased production and therefore a larger workforce. Furthermore, the story goes around that the African kings themselves are out to sell their own people to the white slave traders. But the missionaries have a different version. According to them, the superiorly armed whites exert pressure on the Black leaders and kings. They lend themselves to collaboration because they themselves face assassination threats. The story is certainly darker than what the white traders themselves tell. Anyone who wishes to can learn a great deal about this on the Cape Verde Islands. After all, these

islands serve as a transit point. A mixed group of forced labourers, sailors, and traders settled here. The latter often withheld slaves and black women, resulting in a mestizo population. One can hear about the exploitation of Guinea, not only by the Portuguese but also, and especially, by the still-active Dutch West India Companies. The Catholic members of the *Study circle* argue in *The pendulum comes and goes* that Pius VII is not merely a worthy Church Father. He was inspired by the Enlightenment and wanted to modernise the Church, guided by his own deep convictions. His radical condemnation of slavery was not well-received. Within the Church, he did not always enjoy undivided support when he sought to establish diplomatic relations with non-Catholic states or kingdoms. Furthermore, the more conservative clergy resented his desire to reorganise schools under ecclesiastical authority and remove their feudal character.

However, the Circle authors are not entirely happy with the bull of last July *Sollicitudo omnium ecclesiarum*. With this, the Society of Jesus has been fully restored to its former glory. According to some, the Jesuits remain a major intellectual movement within the Church and are therefore essential; according to others, their philanthropy towards the poor and slaves is often exaggerated. Furthermore, the quality education they provide is inevitably intended for the wealthy and upper classes, while the poor and slaves have virtually no opportunity to receive this quality education.

Difficult ties and connections

From emperor to king

It is the key question for the next meetings of the *Bruges Study Circle*: After the emperor who succeeded the king, will there perhaps be another king, despite all the republican and national slogans? And if so, which king here in the Low Countries? The most obvious one seems to be William of Orange-Nassau. And meanwhile, French law remains in force here, even now that the emperor is on an island somewhere, the ruling royal houses are redrawing the map, and William wants to bring the Southern Netherlands under his authority. Father Greysel reports that widow De Moor is forbidden to *The Belgian Spectator* to be published. According to the curator, no permission was requested and there are not enough subscriptions to consider the publication a newspaper.

"*The Spectator* is not even a newspaper," Jean-Jacques notes.

"That is correct," replies the auctioneer, "and that is why contact has been made with the *Commissariat général de l'Interieur* and with the *Commissariat général des Finances*, to correct that misconception."

A few months later, the problem seems to be solved.

All in all, however, the two visits of the then emperor to Bruges have left some traces. According to the *Study circle* it is safe to say that thanks to the contributions of the craftsmen, sculptors, and painters involved, Bruges has become more beautiful…

***

He wakes as the sun sets. Around him, he hears the groans and cries that turn any battlefield into a grim place, after the remnants of a vanquished army flee before the remnants of a victorious army. He doesn't quite know where he lies. The last places that cross his mind are *La Haye Sainte* and *Mount Saint John*. He vaguely remembers how the enemy cavalry tried to storm the slope, and how his 'square' found itself some distance from the farm of *La Haye Sainte*. He was stationed to keep the horses at bay and prevent the assault on that hill. He knows nothing else. Beside him lies a rider groaning under a dead horse. He doesn't understand a word the man stammers. He does understand, however, that the danger for him isn't over yet. In the dark, it isn't always clear who is friend and who is foe, and retreating soldiers had already slaughtered all the wounded. Worse still are the human vultures and vampires who roam the battlefield with the sole intention of plundering as much as possible.

He tries to filter the sounds of the wounded from his hearing and listen only for possible footsteps. He risks lifting his head slightly and searches for moving points of light in his field of vision. When he doesn't notice anything suspicious, he tries to stand up. He's surprised to find that nothing is wrong with his arms and legs. He does feel his matted hair, unsure whether it's caused by the drying mud or congealed blood. He suspects the latter, given his raging headache. Perhaps the carbine butt of the rider lying next to him struck him on the head, knocking him unconscious. Apparently, that was before the horse approaching him stumbled over the carcass of that young man a little further

along who, just before dying, had desperately hurled his bayonet at the rider, sending both man and horse crashing down beside him. Or could his head wound have been the result of a horse's hoof?

So he can crawl and walk. He slowly moves away from the place where his *square* had been. He is betting the enemy went not in the direction of the setting sun. He resolutely staggers out of the battlefield, keeping to the left the still dimly lit sky. This should bring him near to Overijse, which he remembers from earlier days when he marched with a Dutch regiment.

He thinks about the last terribly wet days. Last week he marched with a number of soldiers via Oostende to Nivelles, finally arriving in *Quatre-Bras*. There his regiment, commanded by the recently appointed Marshal Arthur Wellesley, First Duke of Wellington, would await Marshal Ney. When it was learned that the Prussians had failed to stop the bulk of Napoleon's army further on, they headed north towards Brussels. They took up positions near *Mount Saint John*, where they waited for the French army in the pouring rain.

Then, on the afternoon of June 18th, all hell broke loose. But apparently the weather gods were kind to them, as the ancients would have said. The marshy ground still had the appearance of a brown, muddy slope. The artillery units, which normally can annihilate whole *squares* couldn't hit them with the fired cannonballs. Those didn't bounce but stuck immediately in the soft ground. The enemy shells were also less effective because the mud dampened the force of the explosions. Everyone knew that Napoleon liked to use artillery bombardments. Today, due

to the heavy rain, these didn't have the same impact as usual. Yet, the waves of attacks from both sides didn't stop. By the end of the afternoon, which was quickly darkening due to heavy rain clouds, the horses and men were completely exhausted. The animals stumbled and didn't get up, and many soldiers were too weak to raise their bayonets again or load their carbines. They simply lay there as if dead. All in all, the fighting power had diminished considerably. In the final attacks, more people were wounded than killed. And you were more likely to be trampled or suffocated in the swampy ground than to be reached by a sabre or a bullet.

That must have been the moment when the French Old Guard retreated, pursued by Dutch and English soldiers, and he received that blow to the head from the falling horseman after the young man next to him, completely unexpectedly, pierced the throat of the horse coming towards him with his bayonet.

As he moves further away from the scene of his injury, his thoughts wander. David Teacher is still his name, and he is still the student who, through his own foolish lust for adventure, ended up in this hell. It's a good thing Beethoven removed Napoleon's name from the dedication of his 1804 *Heroic*s. Yet, he cynically continues, it was mainly because the composer was angry about that hero of the revolution who chose to assume the emperorship. His thoughts drift further to Schiller's poem in which the Prussian poet sings of joy. He observes that the wings of Elysium's daughter did not spread over this marshy battlefield and that the mortals here did not become brothers but had wanted to inflict as much pain on each other as possible. How

many disappear here weeping from this gathering, unable to attain universal friendship, let alone prove it… Creatures do not feed joyfully on the breast of nature, but they destroy her and, with her, the heavenly plan. The dear father in the heavenly firmament can only avert his gaze from those arrogant misanthropes and those ignorant fools who allow themselves to be misled by false emperors and self-inflated kings, marshals, and generals. Only some time later will he understand how the leaders of evil, as he calls them, turn slaughter into a reasoned activity. That's when he reads the words of Thomas Bugeaud, Duke of Isly and colonel in the infantry. The same Thomas about whom Jan Lemaître, without his knowledge or future, had commented a decade earlier. The duke wrote: *'Battalion commanders often have to reason with recruits when instructing them. To be heard more effectively, they constantly order a quarter turn, clearly explaining the advantages of the formation, the principles of which have already been demonstrated. Through this method of teaching, soldiers are no longer machines. They identify with our ideas. They sense the goodness of their order and are immeasurably more confident, determined, and intelligent when a war situation offers the opportunity to utilise what they have learned in peace.'*

The history of the world is the judgment of the world, the poet said in *Resignation*. Is world history simply a story of war, crime, destruction, devastation, death, and pain? If so, then this world judgment doesn't benefit humanity. Where did it go wrong? What went wrong with the rise of cultural instruments?

David Teacher reaches Overijse. A local family takes him in, and

one of the daughters of the house cares for him. When the young man leaves for England a few months later, promising to return soon, he doesn't know he will soon have a son, whom the young woman he leaves behind will name Henri. Incidentally, he will never see the Low Countries again.

Napoleon's armies now seem definitively defeated, and France appears to have no resources to form a new army. It is only a matter of months before the Southern Low Countries actually leave the empire and are incorporated into what Vienna called *United Kingdom of the Netherlands*. Brussels celebrates this union in September. However, it is mainly the aristocracy that celebrates, Jean-Jacques believes. This is also the opinion of Lodewijk and Hanne. In the following years, they visit Brussels regularly. Although they are positive about some of Willem of Orange-Nassau's decisions, they quickly understand that citizens do not have a very active role in the administration of the state. The young people are becoming increasingly critical as they integrate into both French- and Dutch-speaking intellectual bourgeois circles.

Criticism is directed at the large property owners and the aristocracy for several reasons. One is the sale of slaves. This has been prohibited for Dutch subjects since 1815, but this administrative ban doesn't really abolish slavery. Those who condemn slavery more radically explain that the Dutch can continue to breed slaves in the colonies, and as for selling them... well, a seller doesn't necessarily have to be a Dutch subject.

Furthermore, monarchs and the aristocracy attempt to contain

the civil pressure on the Second Estate, as a result of the French Revolution, as was the case throughout Europe. Under William I, as in other constitutional monarchies, a system of government emerges in which a Senate is reserved for the nobility and those elevated to the knighthood. For the Second Chamber, the census serves as a safeguard to ensure that landed property prevails over industrial property.

Moreover, the king continues to exhibit absolutist tendencies. Jean-Jacques, like many other Dutch-speaking and multilingual citizens, praises his decisions to gradually introduce the requirement to use Dutch as the official language in Flanders by 1823. But this decision is not at all welcomed by the French-speaking Flemish elite, who had never considered Dutch a full-fledged language. And yet, the elite has no immediate cause for complaint. Noble families such as Ribeaucourt, D'Assche, De Beaufort, De Chimay, De Grave, De Liedekerke, De Looz, De Marnix, De Snoy et D'Oppuers, De Trazegnies, De Villegas, and D'Ursel can safely make their voices heard. But many remain dissatisfied with the tendency to dominate that this monarch, like all monarchs, continues to display. Therefore, some members of the nobility cautiously seek support from the liberal citizens who want to curb princely absolutism. But there are also those incorrigible, arrogant old aristocratic families, Jean-Jacques knows from Hannes' father, who simply want their own privileges back with a governor who is preferably as distant as possible.

Secularising after-effects

At Keizerskaai, the children of Boudewijn and Gertrude struggle to keep the Schoolhouse open. There is a dire shortage of funds after the war. Moreover, another commission from William I was gradually being implemented. Secular schools are established in almost every city in the Low Countries. It is difficult to convince parents that the Schoolhouse's approach and a broader audience means a more open approach, which would benefit every child in the First School. There are still two living groups in the School House, and the children mainly come from families who are friends with the owners. Madeleine learned from Boudewijn that the building on Langestraat where Jan once ran a business with Theodoor van Moorsel was purchased by Eduard-Jan Serruys a few years before he became alderman of the city. The family eventually moved to Rotterdam, but in the meantime, they maintained a warm relationship with the Schoolhuis. Several of the Serruys children were among the avid users of the large library on Keizerskaai.

In 1817, Lodewijk Lemaître and Hanne Greysel had a daughter, whom they named Johanna. The parents joke that the travel between Oostende and Bruges, and Bruges and Brussels, had become so leisurely, even monotonous, that in the last two years they had increasingly talked about their own futures, children, and schools, rather than about children and other people's projects. By other people's projects, they meant not only Lancaster, who remained popular with those in power, but also Pestalozzi's unusual ideas about educating the poor. Their own dream still closely resembled that of Lodewijk's parents and

grandparents: a schoolhouse for rich and poor, for boys and girls, for old and young, a meeting place with science. But even their new liberal friends in Brussels, who were receptive to the idea of a coeducational, non-Catholic school with a limited number of children per adult, did not find the idea of bringing rich and poor together in the same classroom at all self-evident, let alone advocate for it.

Johanna spent most of her childhood with Jean-Jacques and Elise because her parents were often away from the city. Shortly after she turns three, her mother is heavily pregnant. She goes by barge to Oostende with her grandparents and old Madeleine. They spent a few days on Kapellestraat. Boudewijn and Gertrude's children have moved to Keizerskaai, and Jean-Jacques and Elise want to renovate the house so they can use it more often. They envision walks along the dike and on the beach with their granddaughter. Suddenly, Madeleine's condition takes a turn for the worse. Before they can return to Bruges, she dies without ever having seen her great-grandson, who is only a few days old.

Things aren't going so well for Lodewijk either. For some time now, he's quickly become extremely tired on trips to Brussels. Things are completely out of whack when Hanne stops breastfeeding their son a few months later and suggests another trip to visit their intellectual friends. They're supposed to be discussing plans for the further secularisation of primary and secondary schools in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands.

But Lodewijk feels completely incapable of traveling. He looks pale and feels very lethargic at times. He tries to keep track of

what's happening to him. In May 1821, he writes: *'I'm not doing well. I almost always feel a searing pain in my head. I drag myself around the house, and sometimes I don't know why I got up. Was it to get something to eat in the kitchen? But I eat poorly. I often have severe stomach pain. A few nights ago, Hanne was startled when I suddenly woke up with a scream from a severe lower abdominal pain. The doctor says it's colic and that I should try to eat more to prevent the buildup of air and gas in my intestines. But I can't eat, I can't. The other day, I got so angry when someone tried to make me eat that I didn't recognise myself!'*

In December of the same year, Lodewijk writes: *'I now have constant pain where that bullet hit me all those years ago. Damn it, when the army doctor told me the bullet wouldn't be removed. With every breath, I feel pain in my chest. My appetite is dwindling. Hanne says I've lost a lot of weight, and I can see it myself. Poor kids. Their dad barely has any patience for them. And now strange things are happening in my head. It's like I've gone crazy. I claim to see people in the house who aren't there. Johanna recently asked Hanne, "Does Daddy have a friend on his shoulder too?" That's because Hanne once asked her who she was talking to so much. She pointed to her shoulder and said, "My little gnome friend." When Hanne remarked that she didn't see a friend at all, the little girl replied, "Of course you can't see him. He's just my friend and mine alone."*

We were quite taken aback by her question. Had it already gotten to the point where my delusions were obvious to the children? What's next? Will Hanne have to force me to isolate myself when I have such a headache that I don't know what I'm saying or doing?'

By early June 1822, Lodewijk's handwriting is almost illegible. His limbs often tremble, and sometimes he even has convulsions all over his body. He asks Hanne to help him record what he feels: '*I have an almost constant unpleasant taste in my mouth. Sometimes I feel like I'm exhaling the stench of a rotten egg. It's really no fun living in the same house as me. I stink, I'm constantly having trouble walking, I barely eat, and I sleep poorly. All of this makes me angry, and others are angry with me. We don't know what happened to my body, but the doctor suspects that old gunshot wound might be related to my current condition. If that's the case, then I can only advise everyone: "If you're ever hit by a bullet, it's better to risk having it removed from your body than to be killed by it years later." I think my end is not far off. There are days when I don't eat anything but I constantly vomit. No body can endure that. I've arranged with Hanne and my doctor to travel to Ghent by barge tomorrow. That will be my last journey. A colleague of my doctor will take us in. This way, my body can be taken to the medical department of Ghent University after my death. "We hope that mine and other doctors can learn from what they find in my intestines."*

Lodewijk mentions that he would like his writings on Johann Pestalozzi, Johann Sebastian Bach, Daniel Bernoulli, and his namesake Ludwig van Beethoven to be published or at least made available to his children. Johann Pestalozzi, he writes, is that peculiar pedagogue who seems to care for orphans and the poor, but ultimately, according to our relatives who studied him, adopted an attitude toward the poor that strongly resembles the caste divisions the British use when describing Indian society.

Lodewijk's writings on Bach and Beethoven begin with the question of whether child prodigies exist. He explains that he read somewhere that Beethoven himself disliked the term "prodigy". Lodewijk wonders whether people like Bach and Beethoven, and even Mozart, weren't simply given the opportunity to develop their talents very early, simply by virtue of the circumstances of their childhood, thanks to the educational care and parental obsession with which they were surrounded. Shouldn't all children be able to develop their innate talents to great heights if properly guided? Isn't that a noble task for those who assume the role of schoolmaster over young children? Lodewijk sees such an approach more in the spirit of the Enlightenment than in the desire to preserve classes and castes, as Lancaster and Pestalozzi each do in their own way.

In his text on Daniel Bernouilli, he sheds a different light on paternal guidance. He draws on salon conversations. These reveal that Johan Bernouilli was so jealous of his son that he even attempted to claim his work on hydrodynamics under his own name. Lodewijk then reflects on the other father figure who is generous to his children. Is this more often the case, he wonders, when the family is of more modest origins or has fewer financial resources? In the same text, Lodewijk also devotes several paragraphs to Sir Humphry Davy and his assistant, Michael Faraday. Wasn't Davy a kind of spiritual father to Faraday? Hadn't the young man received a kind of paternal support from a client of his employer, who provided him with access to lectures by Davy and other scientists when he discovered Michael's great interest in and knowledge of those

subjects? Lodewijk dares to ask whether greater empathy with the younger generation is related to having fewer possessions and to a less arrogant attitude of parents towards their children in general.
Jean-Jacques believes he understands the scope of his son's concerns quite well. According to Élise, Hanne finds it harder to understand Lodewijk's good-natured attitude, especially now that fate — or the old shooting wound? — is hitting them so hard. And Hanne seems unsure whether she can muster empathetic parental feelings for her now five-year-old daughter, whom she struggles to get along with. Shortly after Lodewijk's death, Hanne moves to Brussels, where she increasingly moves in French bourgeois circles, but Johanna clearly continues to grieve the loss of her father. She only brightens up when she visits grandfather Jean-Jacques. And the feeling is mutual. Élise observes that although they both struggle to cope with Lodewijk's death, Johanna's presence has a healing effect on Jean-Jacques, who, at 62, acts as a kind of mentor to little Johanna. And so it happens that Johanna soon moves in permanently with her grandparents, who also regularly host the Greysels. Those find it particularly difficult to accept Hanne's decision to move to Brussels and almost completely remove her son from the grandparents' home in Bruges.

Hanne heard about François Mosselman's projects during one of her visits to his brother Corneille's house. François has a majority stake in the *Société Vieille-Montagne* with Jean-Jacques Dony. There is talk that he would buy out Dony, but before he's willing to do so, clarity must first be provided on who will have

jurisdiction in the area where the concession is located. When Hanne asks if this isn't part of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, she's told that it's a bit more complicated…

It began in 1816 when the Treaty of Vienna contained contradictory articles regarding the border between the Kingdom of the Netherlands and Prussia due to a measurement error. A shift of two kilometers westward or eastward meant a change in administrative authority over the zinc quarry owned by Dony and Mosselman. A commission was established to address the issue, but the subsequent treaty of boundaries proved just as contradictory as the Treaty of Vienna. For military reasons, both the House of Orange-Nassau and the German Confederation of Principalities continued to claim ownership.

The result is currently an undivided, independent mini-country of 840 acres, or 3.44 square kilometers in the French metric system, with a population of only 256 inhabitants. French law applies there.

As an interim solution, commissioners have been appointed to oversee the area. The United Kingdom of the Netherlands appointed Werner Jacob from Limburg, while Prussia opted for mining engineer Wilhelm Hardt, who lives in Aachen. According to Mosselman's friends, this doesn't solve all the problems, especially since the commissioners are almost never present in Kelmis-Moresnet, as the area is called. Therefore, the mayor of Prussian Moresnet has been appointed to oversee the mini-state's day-to-day affairs. Other matters, such as the language of instruction, military conscription, and taxation, remain open. The area is neutral but not independent, it is considered a

condominium, and this naturally creates difficulties. Therefore, the *Napoleonic Code* is adopted as a law code for the area.
François Mosselman obviously sees opportunities to increase the importance of the *Société Vieille-Montagne* and thus strengthen his personal influence. From 1824 onwards, he took full control of the mine. The area's population has grown steadily over the last two years, not only because young men from both the United Kingdom of the Netherlands and Prussia saw the opportunity to avoid military conscription here, but also because smuggling was a profitable business. Wild stories circulate about the value of smuggled goods and the legal impossibility of customs checking what went in and out. Moresnet resembled a warehouse with open doors on both sides.

One can gather a lot of news from Paris at the Mosselman's. Hanne hears talk about the *Café Procope*. She vaguely remembers some remarks from Lodewijk's father when he talked about his grandparents, who had lived in Paris and who once crossed paths with Voltaire at that famous coffee house. She learns that Mr. Zoppi, a former servant at the last Procope, gave the coffee house his name when he took it over. During that period, the *Cordeliers Club* and the *Jacobin Club* used it as one of their meeting places. Political discussions then replaced philosophical conversations. A few years ago, Jean-Baptiste Heu took over Mr. Zoppi's coffee house. He decided to recuperate the name *Procope*. After the early revolutionary fervour faded, literature gradually took over from politics. In a sense, the coffeehouse is now enjoying a quieter time.
But in Hanne's intellectual circle, philosophy remains an

important topic of conversation. She hears about the *Grundlinien der Philosophie des Rechts* by a friend who attended a lecture by Friedrich Hegel when the Prussian thinker was staying in Antwerp for a few days. He is said to have drawn on the poem by Schiller, whom Beethoven admired, in which the poet presents world history as a tribunal. According to Hanne's, Hegel sees world history as a kind of tragedy. The thinker is referred to have said, among other things, that in this tragedy, '*The spirit transcends compassion, ethical life, and all other sacred values, in which the spirit fulfils itself. With sadness, one can think of the decline of the great nations, the ruins of Palmyra and Persepolis, where, as in Egypt, everything is reduced to a state of death.'* Hanne recognises the fatalism in the final sentence '*But what sank, sank and had to sink*' and she finds that this does not differ much from the determinism that some movements in Christianity adhere to. However, according to her friend, Friedrich Hegel wants to argue that the unlimited, *untimely* spirit exercises its right over the *finite* spirits in world history, making it the tribunal of the world. According to him, this has nothing to do with fatalism, but with dynamism. Nothing lasts forever, not even social conventions and forms of government, and that is where the aristocrats, who want to preserve everything as it was before the revolutions in France, are mistaken. Hanne's friends try to explain to her that Hegel champions the universal right to property, and that civil right is the right to own property. That is the abstract right, and concrete steps have now been taken towards it, they argue. They point to the restrictions imposed on monarchs who link

absolutism to the right to own property including people. Yet, a pressing question remains regarding the role of a monarch. Americans no longer have this problem with their elected governments and presidents, but Europeans must further explore the role of a king in a constitutional state. According to Hanne, a king is completely unnecessary. Kingship is a consequence of the principalities of the previous century. That is also what Hegel means, her friends claim. After all, he states that it is not the task of philosophy to impose norms, but that its task consists of reflecting on what is. Hanne notes with surprise that, apparently, anything goes for Hegel. Is there no morality? The friend who heard Hegel and says he has read his publications notes that morality is a subjective assessment of the consequences of one's own action. According to the person who took the action, this can have positive or negative consequences. And persons can only be blamed for what was actually intended by their action, regardless of its consequences. So there is no absolute morality, but only contextual, based on personal choices. Hanne has her doubts about this. If philosophy is merely descriptive, is theology then the normative philosophy that determines local morality? Is all power then once again given to those who establish religious rules in the name of an *untimely* spirit or a divine figure? No, her friends say, that's precisely why Hegel develops a third aspect when he speaks about the philosophy of law. That is that of moral reality, morality, or the ethical life, if you want. And here come the institutions with which each individual enters into dialogue. There is the family, in which relationships and dialogues have a

sentimental character. Because of this, this institution has so many different forms that it is, in any case, a transitory institution. Therefore, there is the society of citizens, which brings together diversity. But here, the individual can be offended by the fact that other individuals have more property or more power, and because of this, moral quality depends on what one means to others. In society itself, it can be difficult for individuals to develop the necessary moral relationships, except by using underlying groups, corporations, a kind of second family. That in itself is not sufficient to guarantee a general ethical life. And thus one arrives at the significance of the State, say, the third family, for all individuals. The State organises itself with common laws that, among other things, strengthen individuals' sense of statehood, and individuals find a certain moral peace in accepting the Father of the State. Hanne now looks completely astonished: is this then the legitimisation of the evolution from principality to empire, like that of Napoleon? Doesn't that train of thought simply lead back to the figure of an all-powerful sage, not God, not the Prince, but a monarch who speaks for everyone and binds everyone?

With this observation, Hanne sparks a heated discussion about the separation of powers as proposed by Montesquieu.

For most of those present, this separation must go so far that executive power can only temporarily be granted to someone, and solely to ensure that laws passed are respected by everyone. The legislative branch itself should ideally ensure that these laws passed are the result of ongoing dialogue between all individuals in their respective 'families'. The judicial branch

simultaneously ensures that this dialogue continues, but also that the executive branch is not trifled with by those nostalgic for the past.

For the other attendees, Montesquieu is an idealist, and you can't simply separate the powers. The ultimate executor, who represents all the individuals who make up the state, must have sufficient authority to ensure that their signature is binding for the entire state.

Hanne thinks that the second, smaller group of attendees might be supporters of William I. She wonders whether the discussion about the difference between display of power and authority is inappropriate here. Isn't the will of a monarch leaning toward absolutism too easily confused with the concept of authority? And does William I actually lean toward absolutism, or does he adhere to his status as an executive authority that binds everyone to the law? Or is the problem simply that there aren't enough citizens who control and administer legislative power? Some of Hanne's friends have concerns about the rather weak representation of citizens in the House of Representatives. On the other hand, according to the Constitution, the Senate does not have legislative initiative, but can only approve or reject proposals from the House of Representatives.

Meanwhile, the authoritarian circles from the old First and Second estates in this country, who neither want to hear of Montesquieu's proposals nor can tolerate William I, and certainly manipulated the meetings of to have the Notables voting against the constitution, are not sitting idle. You only have to check *Journal des Flandres [Journal of Flanders]* whether

the Dutch-language doppelganger *Den Vaderlander* to have no doubts about the nature of the opposition to the king, an opposition that comes mainly from Catholic quarters and is more religious than political.

Hanne's thoughts drift back to the year after Napoleon' final fall. She was visiting Jean-Jacques with Lodewijk, who showed him a copy of *Defeat of Algeria*, a publication on the recommendation of the Ostend *Society of Rhetoric*.This also included the text with which Amatus Liebaert won the Golden Medal of Honour in the competition part. The poem is entitled *Abolition of Christian Slavery by the Victory Prayer on Algiers*. According to Liebaert, the danger for 'Europe' lurks in 'Africa'. He writes, among other things:

Algiers, is now destroyed… the Robbers' pit destroyed;
Our most urgent hope fulfilled, the Tyrian spirit desolate;
The fountain of tears dried up; the chains cut off

Apparently Algiers represents all of Africa, the Christian slaves all of Europe:

Who saw me, at our shame, bear through guiltless sacrifices;
Our Brethren Redeemed; Europe's Honour Restored;
And by our Lion the African monster felled,

For Jean-Jacques, the following verses, in particular, testified to ignorant arrogance and arrogant ignorance. Slavery was apparently only a curse for Christians captured by North African rulers. He then recounted what his parents once learned in Sluis about the Dutch-organised slave trade of non-Christians. And he also remembered from how his father as a young man had been astonished at how enslaved Ostend sailors, after being

ransomed, considered it quite normal that they could escape slavery as Christians, while this was not possible for their non-Christian Black counterparts. It is perhaps this decades-long misconception that prompted Liebaert to write the following verses:

And the future of slavery [is] eradicated forever;
Before Eternity... may these 'hopes not deceive me' seem to caress!
But take comfort, take comfort,
Brothers! I see the Cross Banners
On the African coast, waving the Victory Pennant
There I see Human Justice stamping with vile feet;
Here I see Courage fighting against the rage;

The arrogance with which the Christian God — and apparently not only in his Catholic version — is presented as the only God, once again belies all philosophical thinking that transcends a narrowly Christian theological association and is expressed in verses such as

When the Slave left God's rejected walls
When he clung on board, and saw his Redeemers
He cried, revived the half ten grave laugh through You;
the Fatherland sees its lost offspring again, grace to you;

How Hanne would love to have access to some documents from that peaceful library on Keizerskaai, which she visited several times with Lodewijk. She could find the texts of Zena Jacob there, but also those of deistic thinkers and thinkers from other parts of the world, whom Lodewijk's family so fondly discussed. At such moments, her thoughts also turn to Johanna, who lives in Bruges with her grandparents, and she hopes she won't be

raised to much Willem-like. But these moments are fleeting, because when Hanne thinks of Johanna, all the passionate moments she experienced with Lodewijk come flooding back, and she still can't handle that. She prefers to remain in her new circle, primarily with French-speaking friends who believe a new revolt against the established powers is warranted. And yet, she has her doubts about the real intentions of some of her acquaintances from the Mosselman circle. Most of them are far too eager to flaunt the power they amassed through financial speculation, along with the accompanying titles. Thinking of the past days in Bruges and Oostende weighs heavily on her. She often consoles herself by mothering her son, who was too young when Louis died to cause the flood of emotions Johanna provokes.

During the years following Louis' death, Hanne spending most of her time in Brussels discussing the pros and cons of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, young Henri Teacher grows up near Waterloo. He follows the construction of the mound requested by William I, on which an iron lion will be erected once the mound, pedestal, and stairs are complete. He set up a small business with the workers, selling them bread, butter, and cheese, which his mother makes herself on the small tenant farm where they rent a room. Of his father, he only has his surname and the memory his mother keeps alive. Neither of them knew about David Teacher's failed attempts to return to Waterloo. He failed to resume his student life and wasted his time in London inns until he was destitute. Finally, he signed on as a cabin boy for the Dover to Oostende line. But on his first

crossing, he fell overboard and drowned in the North Sea during a violent storm sometime in 1825.
Henri has little time to philosophise, as his father and mother did before he was born. His mother has long since given up hope of ever escaping the poverty to which the war drove her. Henri seems an intelligent boy, but he can't profit from this for the moment. He has, however, managed to earn some extra income from his daily visits to the mound builders. Excavation unearths many human and animal bones. Many of the diggers are quite superstitious and fear being tormented by the disturbed spirits of the deceased. They give money to Henri and to other boys who trample them in exchange for reburying all the bones they find. Henri works systematically, creating plots with piles of bones at identified locations. He could never have imagined that these macabre markings would bring him more money a few years later.

The Bruges Study Circle in the United Kingdom

The *Bruges Study Circle* also follows developments in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. The new political reality resulting from the Vienna Convention has no immediate impact on the group's members. They continue to debate primarily human relationships. They discuss slavery and new slavery, as well as the ongoing widespread institutionalisation of child rearing.
The conversation continues for a long time about Abbé Gregoire and his views on the slave trade. Some recall that in 1815 the abbot addressed an appeal to the Congress of Vienna with the

text: '*De la traite et de l'esclavage des Noirs*'. He cites, among others, the former bishop of Chiapas, Las Casas, who is said to have indirectly instigated the importation of Negro slaves in order to defend the rights of the Indians. As in other occasions in the *Bruges Study Circle* opinions are divided. This leads to a debate about another pamphlet by the abbot, published in 1822 with the title *Des peines inflamantes à infliger aux négriers [Shameful punishments to be inflicted on slave traders]* and in which he writes, among other things: '*I call a slave trader [négrier] not only the captain of the ship who steals, buys, chains, imprisons, and sells Black or half-breed people, even throwing them into the sea to make physical evidence disappear, but also any person who, through direct or indirect cooperation, is complicit in these crimes. Thus, the term slave trader [négrier] encompasses shipowners, charterers, shareholders, sponsors, insurers, colonist-planters, managers, captains, foremen, and even the last sailors who participate in this shameful trade.*'

During the discussion of this passage, Jean-Jacques notes that, in fact, no one who owned or still possesses shares in companies that transport goods by sea is exempt from this accusation, not even his own family. It is too easy to argue 'we were not aware of it', as has been written so often and sometimes still is, both in church and non-church humanist circles, about man as if there were different kinds of people and thereby points out to who was not born in old Europe. The *Bruges Study Circle* soon realises that the letters Pope Pius VII wrote to the kings of Spain, Portugal, and Brazil concerning the Negro Trade in southern Europe were ineffective. Élise learned from one of her

correspondents that the Pope had written to the King of Portugal with the following words: '*The Pope laments that this trade in Black people, which he thought had been stopped, is still being practiced in certain regions, and in an even more cruel way. He appeals to the King of Portugal, imploring him to use all his authority and wisdom to eradicate this godless and abominable disgrace.*' But apparently there is no response to such calls.

In the last years before his death, Lodewijk regularly takes part in the conversations in the *Bruges Study Circle*, especially when, due to his progressive weakness, he is no longer able to travel to Brussels. The conversation often turns to the fate of the children of the people, who sometimes fare no much better than slaves sold overseas. Shortly after the establishment of the United Kingdom of the Netherlands, the ever-expanding workshops and factories employ more and more children. In the Ghent tobacco industry, spinning mills, and paper mills, one in five workers is a child, according to a local census. It's a simple truth. Despite the many efforts of both the last Austrian governors and the Napoleonic government, the state of first or primary schools in the Southern Netherlands continue insufficient. The two teacher training colleges that should have provided the country with better schoolmasters were stillborn institutions in 1789, partly due to the influence of conservative church leaders who continued to dominate secular life. The combination of highly incompetent teachers and dire poverty means the school is quickly replaced by the workshop. And now the new government under William I wants to make the training of schoolmasters a priority. The kings and their governments, as

well as the republican governments, show great interest in the proposals of Joseph Lancaster. This interest is primarily economic. If one can bring together many children for clearly defined instruction in a relatively short time at a low cost, one has what might be called a *fabrique d'instruction*, an instructional workshop. That was the thought that Jean-Jacques and Lodewijk had when they finally received a copy of '*Een enig schoolmeester onder duizend kinderen in een school [A single teacher among a thousand children in a school]'*. It concerns a translation of the book by Joseph Lancaster in which he explains his method. According to father and son, Lancaster does not propose the formation of knowledge but the industrial production of poor children into servile poor adults. In a fierce quip, Lodewijk writes in his diary: '*I just read the tenth chapter of Lancaster's proposal. He actually thinks like Pestalozzi, but in an even more inhumane way. Where Pestalozzi assumed he had to give the orphans something that would allow them to live happier as poor people, Lancaster thinks of working-class children like a farmer thinks of draft horses: train the workforce to ensure production.'*

Ensuring production. That's what instruction fore, through imprinting and not through reasoning. Jean-Jacques quotes some passages from '*a unique teacher*' an evening the Study Circle meets. Joseph Lancaster says children are not allowed to talk. He affirms '*It's completely unacceptable for children to waste their time at school and talk; they can't talk and learn at the same time. In my school, talking is considered a crime. For such a large number of children, it happens very rarely; if it does happen, it's*

immediately punished.'."

"This is almost the opposite of what we want to achieve in our schools. Even humanists are more nuanced when they talk about child rearing," Élise observes.

"And it becomes even clearer," says Lodewijk, "when you read how Lancaster implements his complaint card system. This makes the children feel constantly spied on because they can be sued at any time."

Jean-Jacques adds: "This, for me, is Lancaster's true nature. He writes: *'If a student frequently misbehaves, or commits the same error repeatedly, despite all admonitions, the boy to whom he must show the complaint card may hang a piece of wood, like a neck iron, around his neck, and with it he will be sent back to his place. Such neck-woods weigh four to six pounds. They do not pinch or clamp the neck; they are only burdensome because of their nature and the way they lie on the neck when the student turns right or left. As long as the wood rests on his shoulders, it is balanced, but as soon as he turns even slightly right or left, the balance is broken, and the wood hangs around his neck like a heavy burden. He is therefore forced to remain in his upright position'*."

"But what I find even worse," says Lodewijk, "is what follows. You can really wonder whether we're talking about a school or a penitentiary. After all, Lancaster says: *'If this discipline doesn't help, his feet are bound with one or more leg clamp, depending on his offence. A leg clamp is a piece of wood about a foot long, sometimes six or eight inches long, and is tied to the leg. Thus bound, he can only walk with very slow, measured steps; he must take six steps, where he would otherwise only take two. In this*

position, he must walk around the school until, tired, he requests release and promises to always behave well in the future.'."

"The horrors continue for about ten pages," Jean-Jacques continues. When the head and leg restraints don't work, the punished person is thrown into the air. Listen: '*Such boys are also sometimes hung in a bag or basket in the school attic in full view of all the schoolchildren, who laugh at the "bird in the basket". This punishment is the most painful for boys of quick wit and sensitivity. It is most feared the teachers to apply; the name of the punishment is effective enough in itself, and therefore one only very rarely needs to resort to it.*'."

Several members of the *Study Circle* indignantly remark that this indeed has little to do with education.

Toon Greysels shakes his head wistfully: "How is this possible? The name of the punishment is bad enough. That just means everyone has already seen it applied. You might wonder who needs to confess more, the child or their teacher."

In the meantime, the *Study Circle* has access to the book lists the government of King William I accepts for first or primary school. *Mengelwerk* by Perponcher, which was hardly used twenty years ago, is today one of the must-haves according to the *Book list for primary schools*. This miscellany includes titles such as *Aristus; Morgen (Morning) Hymn of Adam and Eve in Paradise; The Ocean and Lyre-song; The vision of Mirza; Towards Philosophy; The Foundling - a true event; The virtuous epicurean; Daphne and Cloe - Field song and Freedom*. Opinions are divided on the content. For some, the morning hymn is a beautiful, childlike depiction of Adam and Eve's life in Paradise; for others, it's a

rather daring fantasy based on a biblical story. For still others, it's a return to the still earth around which the universe moves. For Élise, the stumbling block is the following passage: *'Thou Sun! Both the eye and soul of this great world, acknowledge Him as your Supreme Lord; and let His praise resound through your eternal course. As you ascend, as when you have climbed the high seas of midday, or are descending again.'*

"Imagine such a passage in a reading lesson where no one is allowed to talk about it", says Élise. "That brings the children back to an Aristotelian worldview."

For those who are rather sceptical about the new kingdom that binds North and South together, the *Ode to Freedom* is a hymn to portray the North as glorious and therefore more exalted than the South. The passage *'FREEDOM! First guardian goddess of the Batavian commonwealth! Hail Princess! Inspire your children again with your heroic fire*'. is hereby criticised.

In a long letter to one of Elise's cousins, who started working for the recently established State University of Ghent, Jean-Jacques writes: *"I'd also like to talk about the Lancaster method. I think we're already seeing a fundamental difference between the North and the South. It's certainly an economically advantageous method, but apparently, this method isn't very welcome in the North of our new kingdom. You could argue, of course, that we have far fewer schools for the people in the South than across the major rivers. But I think you shouldn't underestimate the role of the conservative church leadership in our regions. They have always opposed enlightened education, except for a certain elite. Moreover, the cheap Lancaster system is very strict, which sounds good to that conservative, arrogant elite. If the children of the*

people are going to school en masse, it should preferably be done in a very well-controlled way. Of course, we currently live in poverty after the exhausting last thirty to forty years marked by wars, but poverty shouldn't be an argument for sending us back to an era of illiteracy, severely limited instruction for the poor alongside a wealthy salon aristocracy and bourgeoisie that once again keeps knowledge to itself.

Furthermore, I also find it dangerous to portray the Lancaster system as some kind of necessary evil. I believe some of our colleagues portray it as good for barbarians but not for us.

Meanwhile, it's interesting to see that De Perponcher is apparently less dangerous now. I remember his manual for homeschooling children from wealthy backgrounds, which we sometimes discussed at my parents' schoolhouse on Keizerskaai in Oostende. He clearly flirted with Locke and Rousseau, but I think he had little to say about the effective role of the poor in government.

I don't know if you've heard of Betje Wolff. About thirty years ago, she wrote for the middle-class woman, as she herself put it. Her work reveals her concern for adults to see children as they are, so they can learn to respond sensibly to their behaviour. She generally expresses her concern for both the intellectual and emotional development of the children of the enlightened middle class in times of unrest caused by the then-new ideas emanating from France. But she, too, made a kind of definitive distinction between the better-off citizens and the common people. When she writes about the poor at one point, she speaks of 'the despicable huts of the most vile poverty' *and how immorality is rampant. In line with Pestalozzi, she believes that the simple people, who have been placed by Providence in their role as poor, will find greater happiness if they adhere to the laws of morality. Advocates of the Lancaster system can easily adopt her plea for schools where*

children learn to be good.

My dear distant cousin, I hope that at the new state university where you will be working, you can champion the cause of ordinary working people. Perhaps that's possible in a place not entirely dominated by Christian theologians, whether they be Southern Dutch Catholics or Northern Dutch Protestants. We know how the aristocracy here prefers to keep the simple souls simple, but even in the enlightened North, as some of our friends like to call those regions, you often find a similar condescending attitude toward working-class children. Even in the North, there are those who would like to see working-class children educated to make them more docile. It would be a pity if the working class disappeared. According to my friends from Sluis, a certain preacher, Johan Nahuys, even said that the working class is to the nation like dregs to wine. In his view, few working-class children are so gifted that education can elevate them to the point that they become dissatisfied with their position because of the knowledge they acquire. And while some may be able to render great service by climbing the ranks, one must still beware of too much lees, which would spoil the wine. One could argue that, even if one doesn't think much of Lancaster over there, a strict, Bible-based moral education of the lower classes is the desire of those who don't want major changes in the social order.

And yet I remain hopeful, dear cousin. Not only does the State University where you work now exist, but other state educational institutions have also been established. What I'm particularly pleased about, besides the universities in Liège and Leuven, is the launch of the State Teacher Training College in Lier. I learned that this institution not only welcomes trainees from all over the state, who receive an education that includes the use of Dutch, but that the associated training school also benefits teachers already

working there, thanks to the additional training they receive. That seems the way to go to me. A solid education. And may I note with satisfaction that there is also apparently an effort to foster understanding for children and how they learn? You could say the result is a friendly school, at least compared to Lancaster's inhumane child-taming practices — the only term I can think of for his actions with wooden weights and suspended cages.
Let's admit it. In the area of education, the today King Willem seems to be more practical than the then Emperor Napoleon. What they have in common is the concept of state institutions. But where the French were fixated on preventing ecclesiastical influence, the administrative decisions under William seem to reflect a concern that those who attend these institutions will truly learn and acquire knowledge.
And yet… The National Primary Schools installed in our regions seem to be become a rather elitist affair once again. They're not for working-class children, but for the children of Dutch people living in the Southern Provinces. This is already the case for Tournai, Liège, Maastricht, and Namur. The royal decree for Ostend, Bruges, Mons, and Brussels is also in place. I've also heard that such a National Primary School is coming to Antwerp, Ypres, Ghent, and Mechelen. I wonder if children of parents from the Southern Netherlands will be allowed to attend these schools. Of course, I'm also thinking of my granddaughter.

The members of the *Study circle* are naturally deeply affected by Lodewijk's death. They have frequently exchanged thoughts with him in recent years regarding his views on Pestalozzi. They particularly advised him to be cautious when comparing Lasalle, Lancaster, and Pestalozzi. Pestalozzi's philanthropy is certainly striking when compared to the other two, but one can only

detect paternalism in his attitude toward the poor children.
The *Study Circle* appreciated Lodewijk's short biographical stories about Beethoven, Bach, and Bernoulli, whom he greatly admired. After his death, his members attempted to publish these short stories as a Miscellany. The project foundered when Hanne secluded herself in Brussels and Jean-Jacques and Élise moved to Oostende in 1823.
During the last meetings Jean-Jacques and Élise attended, they discussed the gradual implementation of the reforms resulting from the 1820 school legislation. Although the idea of bringing together children of different social backgrounds failed to materialise and an institution like the Lemaîtres Schoolhouse seems to become impossible for a long time, there did appear to be some improvement in teaching practices, including in the public schools. The phonics method gained precedence over the spelling method in learning to read. Writing was now a practical matter and no longer a surrogate for what medieval copyists learned in the abbeys. More arithmetic was used, and the arithmetic exercises often related to daily life and buying food.
A heated debate erupts over the increasing quality of Dutch teacher training compared to some other countries. This is said to be partly because a non-absolutist government like this one increasingly uses the nation as a unifying force. Arguments and counterarguments fly back and forth about whether the overseas territories are part of the nation or not. How can national cohesion be achieved? School for everyone? Different schools for different population groups? Someone cites a statement by Inspector Visser from 1820. He supposedly said

that there must be cohesion, but then spoke of a group of Tierra del Fuego inhabitants whom he considered primitive savages compared to reasonable Dutch Christians. How can a gap be avoided? Because, they argue, it is dangerous to allow it to grow too wide between the lower and upper classes. In their argument, Jean-Jacques and Élise attempt to use the scale of grandfather Yanne Lemaître, who linked arrogance and ignorance. But in the zeitgeist of emerging nations, it seems as if classifying from invaluable to valuable, from primitive tribes to evolved nations, is so popular that any sensible discussion of cultural, religious, and shared life differences becomes completely impossible.

After the passing away of Jean-Jacques and Élise, the *Study circle* focuses primarily on following scientific facts during the years preceding the independence of the Kingdom of Belgium from the Kingdom of the Netherlands. There is less discussion and more philosophising. Without Jean-Jaques' mediation, the discussions too often risks escalating into arguments. Therefore, they prefer to limit themselves to reading about discoveries in the natural sciences and a few inventions. For example, they discuss the rise of the walking machine, the *balance bike*, in response to the mass slaughter of horses in 1816. That year was a year without a summer with a dire shortage of grain and oats. This was, in turn, the result of the eruption of Mount Tambora. Cynical members of the *Circle* don't fail to point out that the Napoleonic Wars may have caused a greater slaughter among horses than the volcanic eruption. It seems to be a common practice, Greysel notes, to attribute the consequences for human

actions to nature, not to underlaying human actions. Perhaps they will argue that replacing the horse with the *balance bike* was a divinely inspired act, he concludes ironically. With this, he ignites yet another quarrelsome meeting.

A slightly less dangerous topic that people like to discuss is the progress in understanding the nature of materials and minerals. The members of the *Study circle* are aware of the general classification proposed by Antoine Lavoisier before he was beheaded by short-sighted, arrogant, and ignoramuses during the French Terror years. He spoke of four kinds of elements: simple gases, simple metallic and non-metallic substances, and earthy substances from which salts can be made.

People discuss the discoveries concerning the relationship between certain metallic substances and magnetism, and the relationship Hans Ørsted established between electric current and magnetism. Naturally, many discussions are devoted to Davy's discoveries and subsequent lectures. Discussions cover not only practical applications of the chemical properties of certain elements, such as the development of the miner's lamp, but also discoveries related to generating electricity. When Faraday is elected a Fellow of the Royal Society in 1824, his lectures are also a topic of discussion.

Some time later the *Study circle* comes back to the hypothesis of triads when Johann Döbereiner discovers that he can group many substances into threes based on their properties.

In November 1827 some members of the *Study circle* travel to Oostende after Jean-Jacques informed them that a huge whale had washed ashore on the eastern side of Ostend Harbour. The

animal generated considerable interest. With their noses pinched, they examined the rotting corpse. Shortly afterward, it is taken away to be exhibited elsewhere as a skeleton. It would be the last time the *Study circle* meets with its founders Jean-Jacques and Élise.

Lodewijk's death has clearly caused a form of lethargy in Jean-Jacques and Élise. Although the *Study circle* try to distract them during the difficult grieving process, they shut themselves off from the outside world. The completely distraught Hanne's distant attitude after Lodewijk's disappearance also leaves deep scars. Toon Greysels tries to dissuade his daughter from the insane idea that Lodewijk's parents had anything to do with his death. She accuses them of not having been attentive enough after his gunshot wound. According to the attending physicians, Lodewijk died of a late-stage infection from his old injury. After reading some medical texts on saturnism, Hanne believes that the lead bullet lodged in Lodewijk's bones may have poisoned him. Her father tries in vain to explain that the army doctor at the time refused to remove the bullet because that action would almost certainly have cost Lodewijk his life. Afterward, Hanne increasingly rejects Johanna because she constantly asks about her father. Jean-Jacques and Élise quickly take on the role of foster parents for their grandchild and isolate themselves from the rest of the world. Despite the closure of the School House on Keizerskaai, they move to Oostende in 1823. Although a State Primary School is also established in Bruges as part of the new school regulations, they chose to enrol Johanna in the Ostend school that had moved into a building on Aartshertoginnestraat

two years earlier. One can only speculate why they move to Oostende. Was it to distance themselves from all the sad memories they were too often confronted with in Bruges?

It isn't until several years later that Jean-Jacques regains a sense of what was happening in child rearing at home and abroad. Élise wrote about this in a letter to her brother in early 1828: *'I feel that the visit of members of our old study circle to the whale's body here on the beach had a symbolic meaning for both me and Jean-Jacques. We now know that we have definitively closed that chapter. It simply wasn't possible to stay in Bruges, in the environment we envisioned as Lodewijk's future work environment. It was impossible. I can't say I'm doing much better here. Only Johanna can occasionally bring a smile to my face. She's a ray of sunshine in the house, but at the same time a constant reminder of our Lodewijk and the sad way her mother disappeared from us and from her life. I have the impression that Jean-Jacques has regained an interest in what's happening around us and is therefore a bit more talkative again. I'm glad about that. Two people who are constantly grieving and silent are certainly not good company for little Johanna.*
I was surprised that a recent message from faraway Vienna about Liszt and Beethoven acted like a spring in Jean-Jacques' mind. The story is simple, and I don't know if it's true. The year we moved to Oostende, the then 12-year-old Liszt was still in Vienna, where he supposedly invited Beethoven to attend a recital in mid-April. According to our sources, Beethoven declined because, as he himself claimed, he couldn't stand child prodigies. I was truly distraught when I heard Jean-Jacques burst out laughing. It was the first time since Lodewijk's death. I was truly shocked. When he calmed down, he asked my forgiveness for the outburst. He saw in that statement,

he said, a kind of confirmation of his own opinion that the miracle lies in the way talented children receive early support. All children can then develop wonderfully, he claims. But the moment also held something magical. Suddenly, the enthusiastic Jean-Jacques reappeared around the corner, the Jean-Jacques who speaks of the power of education. He recalled our conversations about the education of deaf children and about John Goodricke, who was partly due to that education brought Fellow of the Royal Academy as a result of his astronomical observations. That was in the 1780s. Only recently had he learned that solutions had been devised for blind children since then. But the real breakthrough, he told me, came about three or four years ago, when Louis Braille, at the age of fifteen, simplified the script developed by Charles Barbier. Ultimately, Jean-Jacques argues, you see the same phenomenon with deaf and blind children. For a long time, they were treated as uneducable, as outcasts, doomed to begging. And then one discovers that by engaging in dialogue with them in an appropriate way, they are not only educable but also contribute talentedly to the acquisition of knowledge. Goodricke and Braille themselves are striking examples of this, but one can imagine that for those children who were primarily guided by Thomas Braidwood or Valentin Haüy, Charles Barbier, and Louis Braille himself, the emerging diverse approach was a blessing. There are no child prodigies, but children who receive proper support for their talent, Jean-Jacques claims. He is actively seeking out anyone who shares his parents' ideas at the Schoolhouse: a diverse approach for diverse children, all within the same institution. He is trying to contact the New York Public School Society*, formerly the Free School Society. Four years ago, it adopted its new charter, which states that it aims to provide education to all children, not just poor ones, and asks affluent parents to contribute. He would like to*

know how the mixing of children from different ethnic groups is working.
And that, of course, brings us to us. We've been able to follow Johanna in the Ostend state primary school for the past few years. It seems they're cautiously trying to move away from the model where children merely reproduce. Attention is being paid to understanding what needs to be learned. We believe we see in the training of the trainees an attempt to make future teachers more sensitive to different approaches to different children, even in a classroom setting at a public school. A difficult task. The question that keeps coming up is whether this is even possible. Of course, we know we can't continue to insist on an individual teacher for each individual child. But it does seem that the Schoolhuis was clearly ahead of its time!

Jean-Jacques, Elise and Johanna

In the year leading up to Johanna's first year at school, Jean-Jacques invests a lot of his time in raising her. In doing so, he not only reverts to the old *Orbis Pictus*, but he also looks for books that he can read to the little girl and that he thinks will interest her.
He attentively reads the book reviews in the 1821 edition of *Vaderlandsche letteroefeningen of tijdschrift van Kunsten en Wetenschappen waarin de de boeken en schriften die dagelijks in ons vaderland en elders uitkomen oordeelkundig tevens vrijmoedig verhandeld worden [Dutch literary exercises or a journal of Arts and Sciences in which the books and writings that are published daily in our country and elsewhere are judiciously and freely traded]*. He soon establishes that children are still too often just

small adults for those who produce literature in Europe. Although quite a few publications with adapted Bible stories and poetry collections are discussed, only six titles can be found in the chapter *children's books*. These are *The teaching farmer with his children in educational conversations about agriculture and rural economics* by J.Hazeu; *Evening discussions on various scientific and moral topics. A reader for children,* translated from French; *Poems for the Dutch Youth, Paul or the Consequences of Diligence in seven Chapters with eight coloured Pictures and Museum of the extraordinary and wonderful containing true events from our age.* Finally, there is the *A Children's Fairy Tale Book. From the Estate of Mother Goose, collected and published by the Brothers Grimm. Based on High German.*

The reviewer of this latest book is clearly not very pleased with it *'With the permission of the highly learned German publishers and book reviewers, and the very learned, though not very linguist Dutch translator as well, we haven't held a more crazy little book with nauseating illustrations in a long time. A Niederzwehren peasant woman pulled the wool over children eyes with the most beautiful (!) fairy tales! Perhaps we don't grasp the sublime meaning of these wonderful oddities; but we know this: we care too much about the brains and the peaceful sleep of our dear little ones to ever risk the terrifying impression of such spooky pictures and red-stockinged, blue-bearded tales,'* is the judgment of the book reviewer.

Jean-Jacques has bought the book anyway and reads from it to Johanna, showing some caution when showing the illustrations. He's disappointed too. But in his case, it's because he quickly

realises that the fairy tales are adaptations of folk tales Perrault wrote down a hundred and fifty years ago. With *The Legacy of Mother Goose*, the Brothers Grimm created a somewhat more Germanic version of the French Perrault, he thinks. No, then Ernst Theodor Hoffman has taken a more original approach, although according to Jean-Jacques, many of his fairy tales make more sense for adults than for children. He acquires the two volumes of *Children's and Household Tales* also by the Brothers Grimm and first published in 1812. With this, he significantly increased the number of fairy tales and stories for Johanna, several of which he can tell in Dutch or French.
Furthermore there are *The Travels of Gulliver,* the stories of *Don Quixote* and the adventures of *Robinson Crusoe.* Jean-Jacques Rousseau would have recommended the book as youth literature, but Jean-Jacques Lemaître finds the cannibal story woven into it questionable. He would rather read it from *The Swiss Robinson*, by Johann Wyss, a copy of which he managed to find a few years ago. The book promotes European Christian values. Jean-Jacques reads from it and talks with Johanna about sobriety, good housekeeping, tolerance, and cooperation, and how preachers of good morals always promote these values but don't always adhere to them themselves. What Jean-Jacques particularly appreciates is the narrative style in which lessons on natural history and science take the form of an adventurous story. That's why he also appreciates *Evening discussions on various scientific and moral topics*. He fully endorses the words of the book reviewer in *Dutch literary exercises*: '*A little book that imparts much useful and beneficial knowledge, mostly historical, to*

the youngest, both in mind and heart. While some of it may occasionally veer towards the miraculous, under proper supervision we can confidently recommend its reading.'

Jean-Jacques regrets that, to his knowledge, no one has ever been concerned with renewing *Orbis Pictus*. He continues to find it remarkable that Jan Amos wrote a real children's encyclopaedia almost a hundred years before the Encyclopaedia of D'Alembert and Diderot and that the humanists, Rousseau included, never thought of *Orbis Pictus* to be rewritten in light of the advancement of knowledge and science. No, only recently does it seem that more attention has been paid to children as developing human beings and not as more or less finished adults in pocket size. It is remarkable that quite a few preachers do attach importance to children's books. Although they often don't have such a vivid book as *Orbis Pictus* they do make books specifically for children, especially to teach them prayers and parables. For example, Jean-Jacques once received a gift from his father *Spiritual Milk for Boston Babes* written by the Puritan John Cotton. It's essentially a kind of catechism for children, more accessible and shorter than the more complex 100-question catechism for adults.

Johanna herself has a lot of fun with *A Little Pretty Pocketbook* by John Newbury. Although she cannot yet read, the illustrations, just like in *Orbis Pictus* leed to many conversations with her grandfather, who enjoys spending time with his granddaughter examining the details of the wood engravings and fantasising about them. Jean-Jacques has also expanded his library with even more books of children's poems and ABC

books like that of Van Alphen, so Johanna has made looking at and reading books a pleasant and enriching routine.

Even before his son's death, Jean-Jacques doubted about the image of God portrayed by the churches, and that doubt has only increased. His return to Oostende was naturally influenced by the decision to send Johanna to one of the few national primary schools. These schools represented European Christian values but were not under the direct control of the conservative church authorities. The school on Aartshertoginnestraat had forty pupils when Jean-Jacques first took Johanna there. In 1829, she finished her primary school, which had just over eighty children. Although Jean-Jacques and Élise never complained about their choice, they nevertheless observed that the school was not developing as originally intended. It remained a school for more affluent families who paid tuition, but not as had previously been the case with Jan Lemaître's Schoolhouse. After all, he had his own resources, which had allowed him to admit working-class children free of charge. [See *The privilege of knowing*] There was also discussion about the number of children per teacher and the language of instruction. In the national primary school, this should be Dutch, but Oostende has a growing number of French-speaking teachers who do not speak Dutch. Otherwise, the school is equipped in accordance with the general school reform. It is a good building with a solid blackboard and good textbooks. The teachers have received thorough training, either as trainees or as former teachers at a training school, and all have passed an entrance examination.

Johanna is happy with the decision of her grandparents and her absent mother to let her live with her grandparents even after primary school. However, in Oostende there is no longer a single Latin or secondary school since 1798. Both the government and the church are sticking to vague promises to reopen the institutions closed by the French Revolution, but so far, nothing has happened. Therefore, Jean-Jacques and Élise decide to continue Johanna's schooling. They rely on their lifelong experience with the Schoolhouse and the *Study circle*. Jean-Jacques continues to cultivate her interest in children's literature. She develops a keen affinity towards fairy tales and fantasy stories. The many reading and storytelling sessions with her grandfather will have a lasting influence on her. In a few years, she will discover the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen. And throughout her life, she will remain attentive to the ongoing development of children's and young adult literature, which will help her in her later work and in raising her own children. She will also become an avid collector of the fantastic stories of a certain Jules Verne, born the year before she herself left primary school.

It's remarkable that already at the age of thirteen Johanna is deeply committed to the art of learning. Jean-Jacques therefore gathers texts on mathetics and didactics. Johanna quickly improves her knowledge of German, which she has already mastered thanks to years of reading the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales. The inspiration for this is the issues of *Die erziehenden Familien* arriving quite regularly from Keilhau in Saxony. She reads the articles of Friedrich Fröbel. Since 1817, the former

student of Pestalozzi has worked in the *Allgemeine Deutsche Erziehungsanstalt*. He founded it a year before in Griesheim, but then moved to Keilhau with Wilhelm Middendorf and Heinrich Langethal. Jean-Jacques acquired *Die Menschenerziehung* [The Education of Man] as soon as it becomes available. Johanna later claims that she knew entire sections of the book by heart when she left Oostende at eighteen. Her grandfather, together with her, is said to have even drawn a kind of parallel between the structure of Fröbel's work and the laws of the three stages that Auguste Comte formulated during his positive philosophy classes during the same period. The philosopher sees humanity first passing through a theological stage, in which the world around it is explained by analogy with human action. Then, humanity enters the metaphysical stage, in which the world is explained by reference to abstract principles or essences. Finally, humanity enters the positive stage and learns that only empirical science can provide true knowledge. Knowledge then becomes truly accessible to everyone and relevant to all daily needs and requirements.

Jean-Jacques sees Comte's first two stages reflected in the first two parts of Fröbel's *Menschenerziehung* and considers that the rest of his work, when he describes man as a student, as a learning being, is a practical illustration of how Comte articulates the second stage with the third. Jean-Jacques, however, distances himself from the idea that empirical science is the result of an evolution that would lead to some kind of final destination of human development. He questions whether replacing the *Why*-questions with the *how*-questions do not

curtail human knowledge rather than increase it. And to the extent that he can follow Comte, the philosopher would consider *Why*-questions about the nature of things to be utopian questions because they aim for a universal explanation of the nature of things, something that, according to him, falls under metaphysics and should therefore not be sought. Jean-Jacques explains to his granddaughter that he himself prefers to see the two types of questions merge and that empirical *how*-support questions*Why*-questions metaphysical: "You may be able to develop hypotheses to approach physically what cannot be explained… It is possible that among the questions that do not start with *Why* or *how* there are some impossible questions, he adds. You can certainly formulate hypotheses for the question '*Why* do people believe?', or even the question '*Why* do certain people in a certain culture and place believe in this or that God? You can give descriptive answers to '*How* do people of a certain culture believe? But the question *'Does God exist?'* may be a pointless question, while *'Does faith exist?* seems like a trivial question to me."

Jean-Jacques' dedication to Johanna's education is the only thing that interests Élise. After her son's death, and especially after Hanne's emotional reaction, Élise has tried to dedicate herself to reading and rereading the history and the role of women in science. She hopes that Johanna, thanks to her interest in all things related to learning will choose the thoroughness that characterises both herself and Lodewijk and won't be swayed too easily by general slogans, as her mother seems to have been doing since Lodewijk's death.

During a conversation, her granddaughter asks why there is always such a negative reaction towards studies for girls and women. Élise suggests that they read together two texts that she herself had read at the time. She takes the anonymous *An Essay to Revive Antient Education of GentleWomen* in hands as well as *De l'Education des dames pour la conduite de l'esprit dans les sciences et dans les moeurs [On the Education of Ladies for the Conduct of the Mind in Science and Morals]* by Poullain de la Barre. That's an author Dieudonné sometimes mentioned.

The English text dates from 1673, and Élise's copy only mentions the publisher and states the book is dedicated to all ingenious and virtuous ladies. The author systematically refutes all arguments labelling women as incapable of scientific work, largely by demonstrating how the education of *GentleWomen* has been practiced since antiquity. He argues that in the past *women were educated in art and speech*. Even in the Bible there are traces of it, writes the author. Furthermore, it is clear that there *were eminent women in art and speech* when they were trained to do so. In addition, there are *women who became excellent linguists*. Ana Maria Schurman is one woman who serves as an example. The book describes how women trained to do this *good orators* have become and *were skilled in logic*. Besides Hipparchia, the author mentions other Greek and Roman female philosophers. Therefore, women are also good philosophers, the text continues, mentioning women from later periods. At the time of the work's publication, the skills of Ana Maria Schurman and Christina of Sweden, among others, were current. Naturally, for this author or authors, the divinely

ordained separation between rich and poor, between those of low and high descent, is also present. This easily dismisses the notion that not everyone is destined for study, which is true for both women and men. Because, all things considered, the text states that God created women just as reasonable as men, precisely so that they can support their husbands in this way. This self-evident role as a supporter bothers Élise and Johanna. If you interpret the authors literally, then unmarried women benefit from remaining single for a long time, because this allows them to devote themselves to study instead of motherhood and home management. In line with the spirit of the times, women are portrayed as weaker, and therefore always at the service of men. But on the other hand, there are just as many examples of well-educated men marrying well-educated women, or teaching their wives science themselves, which is an important argument for a good education for women. The postscript mentions a specific school for *GentleWomen* at Tottenham-High-Cross, were the standard curriculum for women, consisting of various crafts, dance, music, singing, writing, and accounting, only fills half the time. This frees up space for Latin, Hebrew, other languages, as well as Astronomy, History, Arithmetic, Geography, or Experimental Philosophy, depending on the student's interests, abilities, and desires.

Poullain de la Barre's book dates from the same period and uses symbolic names for the arguments written in dialogue. There is *Sophie*, the lady so learned that she seems to represent Knowledge itself, *Eulalie*, the lady who speaks elegantly and easily, *Timander*, an honest man who adheres to reason and

common sense and *Stasimachus* the peaceful one, opponent of division, deceit and know-it-all attitude. As in *On the equality of the two sexes* here too the author champions the equal capacity of women and men to learn, when they belong to the class that enables them to instruct themselves.

Johanna gradually understands that within society, there are often calls for women from wealthy backgrounds to be given the same opportunities to educate themselves as men. Far fewer voices advocate for the universal education of boys and girls from all backgrounds, without exception. Comenius' long-standing wish remains unrealised, despite religious and secular reforms. Clearly defined lines remain between the powerful aristocracy and wealthy citizens on the one hand, and the crafts on the other. The poor in the workshops, mines, and factories, and the slaves, receive little or no attention.

Just at the time she's discussing the differences between rich and poor with her grandparents, arrogant property owners are once again leading a revolt against the arrogant established families. As a result, the Kingdom in which Oostende is located will once again change its name.

Kingdom of Belgium or free Moresnet?

Old power relations in a new guise

There has been unrest for quite some time in the United Kingdom of the Netherlands in the year 1830, which is again *of the Lord of Christians*. The revolutionary French calendar has been dismantled, and this part of the world, which arrogantly appropriates the rest of the globe, accepts no other metaphysical or physical starting points for counting years.

While Johanna attended the National Primary School, Jean-Jacques often had heartfelt conversations with some of the school's teachers. Since Johanna left school, Jean-Jacques occasionally invites some of them to spend a Sunday together.

That Sunday at the end of October, the first of the three promises of the provisional government is discussed: *'The provinces of Belgium, which were seceded by force, will form an independent state.' "*

Although the violence was all in all manageable," Jean-Jacques begins, "I think the real violence is yet to come. It's almost a Rousseau anecdote: whoever shouted the loudest that the land they fenced off is now theirs has once again gained a whole host of followers who agree with them. But those loudmouths preparing to take office in a Senate have long considered themselves the rightful descendants of the landowners of large swaths of Belgium's provinces. We should have no illusions. This is not a popular revolution. It's the coup d'état of a conservative aristocracy, aided by a few major industrialists and financiers, landowning newcomers, and what might be considered the

young nobility. The high-ranking magistrates and civil servants who join them also belong to this elite of conservative families."
One of the teachers present, of Dutch descent, says: "We can only conclude that Willem I and his ministers seriously underestimated the influence of those conservatives, but especially of the conservative Catholic church structures. Just look at the continued anathema against national education, despite the clear signal that competent Catholic teachers, principals, or administrators are not being excluded."

There is more clarity in November. This includes a hateful declaration that a monarchy established in Belgium will never be allowed to ally itself with the House of Orange-Nassau, in order to rid the territory of that house forever.
"Pathetic," says one of Jean-Jacques' visitors, "the kind of thing that used to be included in secret addenda in treaties among ruling royal houses. And now those constitution writers are essentially following the same line of reasoning."
"And who will be the Good King?" asks another guest.
"According to what we're hearing from Brussels, whatever as long as it's not Orange-Nassau. They're eyeing the House of Bourbon and the son of the King of the French, crowned in August," says Jean-Jacques.
"It's funny how those power-hungry people keep defending the father figure at the top, regardless of the liberal power shifts that seem to be happening in the American states these days. They even turn him into a King of the People instead of a propertied King of the Land. It's *King of the French* and not *of France*, and it will also be *King of the Belgians*…" says someone.

Another attendee interrupts her: “But that liberal power policy in the American states does not protect those who cannot make their voices heard any better than the royal administrations here. I don’t know if you’ve heard about the recently voted *Indian Removal Act*. With this, the State authorities drive the Indian tribes from the East to the West under the guise of treaties with the government.”

“…but to get back to the future *King of the Belgians*…does that mean that the areas now called Belgium will come under French influence again?”

“From what we’re reading at the moment, that’s quite likely,” Jean-Jacques replies. “The conservatives see the rejection of Willem’s policies and the ascension of Louis Philippe of the House of Bourbon as the right ingredients to firmly regain power.”

“It is clear that they are also looking for the most efficient way to keep the population under control,” another visitor continues. “Without *removal act*, but perhaps with a *silencing act*. The danger of riots and small uprisings always exists, even if they are not directed against any noble house. The poor, hungry day labourers of Brussels were allowed to play their part in creating a rebellious climate, but it was never the intention to actually give them more authority. In that respect, the new rulers are just as unsympathetic to the people as Willem’s ministers.”

“Control will be implemented quickly, my friend,” says Jean-Jacques. “The French-speaking Flemish bourgeoisie hates the national primary schools, which promote Dutch in Dutch-speaking areas. You’ll see them abolished immediately, and the

church will reassert its grip on education. Not only was the Dutch language a thorn in the side of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, who make Flanders their profit center, but also the fact that the Lutheran northerners wrested power from the Catholic Church. I fear you'll soon be unemployed. I'm almost certain the national schools will close."

"And then? Will we go back to the little school, where children stand by foot and listen to the teacher's lecture from his lectern, like the priest from his pulpit? Or will the children kneel on the floor again, accompanied by the teacher's assistants?"

A few years ago, my late son and I reviewed Joseph Lancaster's system. We saw the enthusiasm with which the elite, who oversee the common people, defended the Lancaster system as THE model for public schools: elementary, inexpensive, instructional, based on punishing transgressions rather than appreciating success. Large rooms, where children could only look in front of themselves, seemed to be the ideal option for public schools. There was no universal introduction to science for everyone, no successor to Comenius.

"So the advancement of working-class children remains an exception? Working-class children can develop, but outside of school? And the most intelligent among them can only hope, like Faraday, to enter the trade of an understanding craftsman?" someone asks.

"Something like that. By the way, I heard that Faraday, whom you use as an example, was just appointed professor of chemistry in the *Royal Military Academy,*" says another visitor.

Jean-Jacques shakes his head wistfully: "How far removed we

are from what my parents started here in Oostende with the Schoolhouse on Keizerskaai? It's sad. I foresee new generations of ignorant people who will sooner or later end up in coercive institutions like prison or the army."

The meeting that Sunday is already drawing to a close when suddenly one of the guests says: "Ha, I remember what I wanted to say when you were talking about the removal of Orange-Nassau from the Belgian Provinces. Have you yet read anything about that strange *condominium* Neutral Moresnet about which no agreement was ever reached in Vienna? It's a tiny piece of land where a zinc spar mine caused disagreement between the rulers of the time, and which you could say became a kind of contested private property of the mine owners? There were supposedly discussions going on where Willem I would simply buy the 840 acres from the Prussians, making it a kind of personal royal possession within the *United Kingdom of the Netherlands*. But now, of course, everything has ground to a halt. I heard from a friend at the university in Liège that it looks likely that Kelmis-Moresnet will one day gain an independent status among the surrounding kingdoms or states."

"So you could say that Moresnet is a small estate in the middle of a large landholdings," Jean-Jacques notes with a chuckle. "But such a no-man's-land will probably cause problems for its inhabitants. I think…" Here Jean-Jacques is interrupted by a loud coughing fit coming from another part of the house. He anxiously goes to find Élise, whose coughing fit won't subside. A little later, Johanna, somewhat embarrassed, appears in the room to escort the guests out.

In the Waterloo area, Henri Teacher and his friends decided to illegally clear land in “forbidden territory”. These were the fields where, as boys, they piled the bones of fallen soldiers and dead horses. Most locals avoided these fields. There are grim stories about will-o’-the-wisps and lost souls. But Henri knows there are only bones there, and when necessary, he and his friends grind them into fertiliser.

Because of their proximity to Brussels, Henri and his friends frequently interacted with Walloon volunteers who, among other workers, led the small uprisings that would help justify the secession of Belgium. At that time, they had little insight into the reasons for the secession. There was, of course, the pressure from Catholics who continued to resist what they perceived as Lutheran interference in their affairs. Poverty also played a role, and as always, blame was shifted to foreign powers. So *Willem Weg (William Away)* is definitely better than *Willem Hier (William Kept)*, that’s the reasoning. No one talks about the impending power grab by the conservative local property class. What needs to be done is to get Orange-Nassau out of the Belgian provinces.

The last years of Jean-Jacques Lemaître

Eduard-Jean Serruys is the chairman of the Ostend Chamber of Commerce. He has moved into the building at Langestraat 69 in Oostende which once served as Napoleon’s residence and has been his property for several years. As a merchant, he is pleased with the regular ferry service to Dover, but not at all enthusiastic about the idea that the King of the Belgians might be a Bourbon.

He prefers to lean on the English rather than the French. Many industrialists and merchants share this view. And lo and behold, those who are reluctant to embrace the rapprochement with the French House of Bourbon gradually gain the support of the National Congress. This support comes because the Congress is encountering resistance from the other reigning monarchs to a return of French influence in these regions. This could lead to the partition of these provinces between Prussia, the Netherlands, and France, something that those who favour the Belgian Provinces absolutely do not want.

The provisional governing body, dominated by the conservative families of the old and new nobility, is now convinced that the *United Kingdom of Great Britain* can be her mainstay. The English Crown is interested, especially if the *National Congress* accepts widower of Crown Princess Charlotte German-British Leopold Joris Christiaan as king. Not only is he of German descent, he also served Russia and holds British citizenship. Moreover, he is well-liked in Paris. He belongs to the House of Saxe-Coburg. He speaks a handful of languages fluently, but no Dutch. For those who aspire to power in the Belgian provinces, this last point is not a problem at all. The big problem, however, is that the proposed king is Lutheran. They demand a marriage with a Catholic princess and the Catholic upbringing of any children born of that marriage. A Catholic princess is readily available: other houses would prefer the daughter of the French king to his son in this area, which is now certain to be a new country despite the opposition of the House of Orange-Nassau.

In high places, Jean-Jacques is contemplating, they must have

thought a Catholic princess subordinate to the king himself subordinate to the constitution. Moreover, the 40-year-old prince is good friends with the powerful Rothschild family. So… what can the Brussel *connivers* wish more? Jean-Jacques and his friends are not at all surprised when they hear that the *National Congress* "elect" early June 1831 the king with over three-quarters of the votes. It looks like everything was ready for the man to make his joyful entrance, perhaps in just over a month.

A few weeks after Leopold I, King of the Belgians, is sworn in, Jean-Jacques' friends visit him at the urging of granddaughter Johanna. The girl has only recently turned fourteen, but she often thinks like an adult. When they are alone, Jean-Jacques systematically steers the conversation toward rather melancholic reflections on the meaning of life. Johanna is desperate to wrest a smile back from the dear man she considers more like a father than a grandfather. She quickly realises that her grandfather is in danger of slipping into a bitter melancholy after the death of Grandmother Élise, just one day before Leopold George Christian of Saxe-Coburg passed through Oostende on his way from Calais to Brussels.

The conversation gets off to a bit of a slow start. Jean-Jacques talks about the *connivers* of whoever wants power and calls Leopold a *King Without a Country*, a puppet in the hands of those who neither want an absolute monarchy nor a representative body. One of his friends then says: "And yet, Jean-Jacques, there are people in Brussels who are cautiously trying to keep Church and State separate. Apparently, some of the episcopate here in our region has resigned themselves to this."

Jean-Jacques counters: “Hmm, I think you’re expressing your satisfaction too soon. Imagine, many people think democracy has gone too far. I can’t help but see the hand of ultramontanes and members of the Society of Jesus here, mark my words.”
“Aren’t you seeing things a little too pessimistically, my friend?”
“Listen, I know, of course, that my dear granddaughter is very worried that I’m only having pessimistic and depressive thoughts. I miss my dear Élise of course, and I still miss Lodewijk. Hanne disappeared with my grandson, about whom I never heard again. I haven’t been spared family dramas. But I take great pleasure, especially when I’m feeling sad, in the conversations Johanna has with me. She cares deeply about me, I know that. But to get back to your question. It’s not pessimism, my friend; it’s unfortunately realism. It’s what I would call an objective view of society. In the words of Auguste Comte, I practice *sociology,*” says Jean-Jacques with a wink.”
“Grandfather and I have talked about the *Cours de Philosophie Positive* we read,” Johanna adds.
“Auguste Comte appears to regard the study of societal progress as a fundamental science, alongside mathematics, astronomy, and physics, among others. Is that why you do bring up the word *sociology*?” asks one of those present.
“Yes,” replies Jean-Jacques, “as you may already know, that is the term Comte proposes for that science.”
Another attendee says: “I think I understand what Jean-Jacques means when he uses the word realism instead of pessimism. After the brutal way in which new rulers in France pushed aside old rulers, you can see a certain decline. And so conservative

figures are regaining the upper hand in some matters. I would say that the way the Church, separated from the State, deals with those who, according to the conservative church hierarchy, do not adhere to institutional rules is a good indication of this. I'm thinking of Abbot Grégoire, well-known to us for his spiritual values and dignity. He always remained a constitutional bishop. Yet, that cost him dearly. After all, he refused to make concessions when Napoleon turned revolutionary France into an empire. He denounced the new nobility as fiercely as he did the old nobility, but continued to fight for Christian values in a Christian nation. In his case, you could say that his humanism, combined with his Gallicanism he clashed *between* State and Church. After the secular authorities got rid of the figure who now made them uncomfortable, so he turned to faith, he encountered an equally unyielding, hostile church hierarchy. I'm not religious myself, but that doesn't change the fact that I'm deeply disturbed that this man, whose humanism was always guided by his Christian philosophy and faith, in a sense only clandestinely was given the last sacraments and extreme unction. The church hierarchy apparently feels justified in playing with the faith of people who, as Christians, don't submit to the arrogance of power in any way.

Another guest says: "This is arrogance that, by those who cultivate it, is not considered as such. It is a ridiculous, but no less dangerous, form of arrogance. It is the ridiculous arrogance of both leaders and subordinates. It is the arrogance of the civil servant who, on the death certificate of the great French mathematician Sofie Germain, wrote the word '*rentier*' and not

the desired *'scientist'* and would have noted: *'those are not women's issues'*."

A sad smile appears on Jean-Jacques' face.

His attentive friend sees this and quickly continues: "Yes, you can think of all sorts of things about it. I hope to think that the official's stupid remark doesn't change the fact that Sofie Germain was indeed a scientist. The stupidity can harm the living, but not the memory we have of them. But I have another *fait divers* for you. Did you know that there was much talk about the fact that Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, on his way to Brussels, entered Oostende through the Keizerspoort (Emperor Gate) and then paused for a moment? Everyone was talking about his gesture of offering only his right hand to the city officials and nobles who received him there, instead of both hands as is customary. It is said that he did this to wave with his other hand to the onlooking crowd, and that this made him instantly popular.

Now a wider smile spreads across Jean-Jacques' face: "So even if it is a coincidence, a *fait divers* as you say, we can at least presume that our brand-new constitutional monarch, held in strict ties by those in power, is a good trader of personal sympathy. That's a nice thought!

Élise's death, just around the time that local conservative agitation led to the accession of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, had indeed left Jean-Jacques mired in deep melancholy for over a year. It was only after he began receiving guests at his house again, thanks to his granddaughter's good care, that he not only joined in discussions about local events but also took a renewed

interest in what was happening elsewhere in Europe.
Jean-Jacques is following the news reports from France again. What he hears supports his conviction that those who crave power are constantly seeking ways to silence others. Of the French unrest of 1830, which resulted in Louis Philippe I replacing Charles X, he remembers above all that kings subject to a constitution sooner or later crave more power and essentially reject the very idea of legislative power, separate from the executive. In this respect, they are not so different from those who seize power through a civil or aristocratic revolt against absolute rulers. Just remember self-crowned emperors… Charles X had quickly abolished freedom of the press and the constitutional House of Representatives. He also manipulated the tax system to prevent liberals from entering the House of Representatives, and finally, he amended the constitutional charter to return power to the old established order. But lo and behold, things apparently went wrong, and along came Louis Philippe, who suddenly became the epitome of a monarch who guaranteed the wishes of the people. Here one has to interpret '*people*' as '*non-noble bourgeoisie*'. Moreover, the mood is shifting again in France, strangely enough just as Napoleon's exiled heir, Franz Karl Joseph, died of lung disease. Equally strange are the heroic stories and the grandeur of France under Emperor Napoleon, which Romantic writers as the increasingly popular Victor Hugo. According to Jean-Jacques, other intellectuals are adopting this Romantic view of things. You see and hear it in literature, but also in music. Was Frans Liszt influenced by Hugo, Sand, and other composers? Didn't the cannons of 1830

finally give him a wake-up call? Jean-Jacques tells his granddaughter that he doesn't think Louis Philippe will die as king, something Johanna will reflect on years later.

The more regular sailing ship connections with England mean Jean-Jacques receives again regular news from those regions. As early as September 1833, he hears talking about the *Factory Act* edited in August. To his knowledge, it is the first time in a European country that children's working hours have been regulated. It certainly does not mean the right to a child's life for those whose fate dictates they are born into a working-class family or to be a poor orphan. The *Factory Act* states that children between the ages of 9 and 13 employed in cotton, wool or silk factories '*only*' may work nine hours a day. Until they are eighteen, they were '*only*' allowed to twelve hours of work.
From the limited information available to him, Jean-Jacques concludes that children under the age of 9 may be receiving some form of primary education. He can't determine what this entails, but he suspects the Lancaster system is also being promoted in the United Kingdom when it comes to educating poor children.
One of the old friends of the *Bruges Study Circle* who as a fervent supporter of Willem I had emigrated to The Hague for a while, is back home now that peace has more or less returned. He brings an inspection report for Jean-Jacques in the form of an open letter from inspector Henricus Wijnbeek. The report concerns the state of education in the province of Overijssel. The letter is dated October 14, 1833, and provides a clear picture of the dire state of primary school for working-class children,

despite the efforts of the government and the diligence of some qualified teachers. In that *Report on the state of primary schools in Overijssel during the school visit of the undersigned in the summer of 1833*, Jean-Jacques underlines the following passages:

'*While walking through the Overijssel school districts, using this report as a guide, Your Excellency will have noted, among other things, that the seven school overseers are all inspired by the same spirit, that of zealously promoting the gradual improvement of school facilities, although some may reap greater and better results than others, the cause of which lies partly in greater skill, policy, or years of service, but also partly outside their own capabilities; that the school funds, which have been introduced throughout Overijssel, with the exception of the cities of Zwolle, Deventer, and Kampen, are poorly managed in many municipalities, and that there are school teachers who have not received school fees for one, two, or even three years*.' According to the inspector, things have improved now that the Provincial Executive is paying more attention to this. However, the school buildings are in a deplorable state. Jean-Jacques points out: '*that Kampen stands out for the beautiful town building of its educational institution, but that two miserable city schoolrooms stand out hideously against it, one inside, the other just outside the gate; that the schoolrooms in a large number of municipalities are in a poor, indeed, in some cases, unusable condition*'. Here too, the Provincial Executive appears to be responding, but government assistance is needed. The report then discusses the education provided. Jean-Jacques notes that some teachers are still single-

handedly teaching large groups of children. In one case, the report mentions 200 children for a single teacher. And here comes the Prinsen's teaching method. Jean-Jacques' objection to this teaching method is its rejection of learning to read and write simultaneously. Analysis, the importance of which has been demonstrated by various experts since the beginning of this century, has been minimised here in favour of synthesis. This brings back the need for lengthy spelling lessons, although Prinsen himself warns against this to some extent. The author describes the importance of the aids, including the Reading Machine and the Letter Planks. And about this, Inspector Wijnbeek writes: '*Initial reading instruction using Prinsen's method is quite commonly followed, and its effectiveness is increasingly confirmed, provided it is used by experts; for I have found that older teachers, imperfectly familiar with it, do better following the old method than the new one, which they usually distort. This teaching method should actually be used with a reading machine. However, I have encountered very capable teachers who used nothing but blackboard and chalk for initial reading instruction, and who, through their exceptional quickness and neatness in writing, demonstrated that they could easily do without a reading machine*'. The writing itself is not so much about the skill of writing, but rather about the grace of the handwriting. Yet, Jean-Jacques emphasises tests are also taken during the initial teaching of writing, but that these tests should be multiplied and the definitive results awaited before deciding on this matter. For numerology and morphology, the school overseer in one of the districts provides some teaching

guidelines according to Pestalozzi. Wijnbeek says about this: '*However, since they were not treated properly because he only knew them from books, I found some comments to be made on their use, which I am assured will not be lost.*' Jean-Jacques has many questions about history and geography. History is a local matter, and the inspector would like to see a broader approach, albeit with the necessary precautions: '*I hope that my advice, communicated in this regard, will have good results, that it will be dealt with more generally, even if only in its main features and always with the aim of instilling early principles of attachment to King and Fatherland.*' When it comes to geography, it seems clear that a distinction must continue to be made between the different classes. Apparently, less needs to be taught to children from rural areas (the countrysides): '*There (and perhaps everywhere) one should start with education at the place of residence and gradually widen the circle, but, at least in the countryside, no further than the pupils of their station need.*' Finally, according to the inspector, singing is generally practical and '*used in most schools, among other things, to arouse true patriotism through songs tuned to that tone*.' Jean-Jacques is unsure about what exactly the inspector wants, but assumes he approves of this cheerful patriotism.

The open letter concludes with a reflection on the smaller school attendance during the summer months, especially in rural areas. According to a fairly accurate report by Wijnbeek, about one-seventh of the population currently attends school in the entire province during the winter, while in the summer and especially during the harvest months, many rural schools are simply

closed. All knowledge for everyone is and remains a Comenius utopia, even in a country where investments are being made in state primary schools. And the French idea of equality has done very little to change this, Jean-Jacques finally believes. Ignorance is still not being sufficiently addressed… because those in power still look too condescendingly on those who are not of the same class? Jean-Jacques is almost certain of that.

The Kingdom of Belgium and the King of the Belgians gradually becomes the new reality for the Lemaître family and their friends. In 1832, Belgium's political marriage with France is sealed by the union of Leopold I with the daughter of the French king. The crown prince, born of this marriage, is not yet two years old when he dies. Although Jean-Jacques and his entourage hold republican and liberal views, the personal tragedy of Louise Marie and Leopold doesn't leave him unmoved. He knows what it is like to see children die or disappear, and he understands the allusions to the grief of Leopold of Saxe-Coburg, who, moreover, lost his first wife in childbirth. And for Louise Marie, who is half her husband's age, life must not be easy either.

Today, the people of Oostende are certain the royal family wants a more permanent residence in their city. At the end of August, the royal baggage arrives in the house that once hosted an imperial guest: the Ostend city council is making Langestraat 69 available to the king and queen. A royal guard will be coming from Ghent to provide local guard duty. The journey from Brussels to Oostende occurs by carriage but the governing body of Belgium has already decided to have a railway network built.

The law confirming this decision states: *A railway system will be established in the kingdom, with Mechelen (Malines) as its central point and heading east towards the border with Prussia, passing through Leuven, Liège and Verviers, from the north towards Antwerpen, from the west towards Oostende via Dendermonde, Ghent and Brugge (Bruges), and from the south towards Brussels and the French border, crossing Hainaut.* It remains to be seen how long it will take before Brussels is connected to Mechelen and Mechelen to Ostend.

Even without any railways, news of the Catholic Church's re-occupation of schools travels quickly. Jean-Jacques hears of it shortly after the first issue of the *Journal historique et littéraire* in Liège, what publisher Pierre Kersten has to say. He was a strong advocate for Catholic interests during the United Kingdom of the Netherlands. Even today, he continues to offer an ultramontane and theocratic analysis of the political events in the new kingdom which *national Congress* agreed to the election of a Protestant king. Jean-Jacques knows from a good source that Kersten draws his inspiration from members of the Society of Jesus. Naturally, there is a strong push for the establishment or re-establishment of Catholic higher education, and Jean-Jacques sees this as a harbinger of what he had already suspected when he warned his friends that State and Church might not remain as separate in practice as secular humanists wish. Partly due to the intervention of Pope Gregory XVI and the Belgian bishops, the *Catholic University of Belgium.* Although the university apparently limits itself to teaching philosophy and theology, besides lecturers in church history and preliminary

study of Holy Scripture, dogmatics and morals, one finds Rector Pierre François Xavier de Ram teaching Dutch literature, and Count Charles de Coux teaching political economy. According to Jean-Jacques, this last point is no coincidence. Charles de Coux previously worked in Paris with Hughes Lamennais, who at the time proposed a theocratic democracy. Since last year however, Lamennais has made himself permanent enemy of the institutionalised church and its hierarchy with *Paroles d'un Croyant [Words of a Believer]*. According to Jean-Jacques, a theocratic democracy can lead to even more arrogant situations than the classic combination of the State and the existing Catholic Church.
Meanwhile, tensions arise between the proponents of the state universities in Ghent, Leuven, and Liège and those who defend the University of Mechelen, founded by the bishops. Then, Brussels Freemasons also start with the *Free University of Belgium*. Jean-Jacques fears that all these different institutional projects are not the result of a genuine pluralistic desire, but rather the result of the advocacy of arrogant, power-hungry groups within society.

In May 1835, the railway link between Mechelen and Brussels is in operation. Construction sites had been set up in various locations to put the previous year's plan into practice as quickly as possible, Jean-Jacques hears from Johanna. She reads him the newspaper, which contains an enthusiastic report on the opening of the railway. Johanna is now Jean-Jacques' connection to the world. He is nearly blind and suffers severely from kidney stones. He no longer goes out. Reading the

newspaper aloud is a new routine for granddaughter and grandfather. Every day, she read the headlines aloud, and then Jean-Jacques asks her to read certain articles in full.

A post about Paris with a glowing review of the *Café Procope* evokes vague memories of stories about Grandfather Dieudonné, who once frequented the café. Back then, it was Voltaire who met the actors there; today, it's the haunt of Alfred Musset, Théophile Gautier, Roger de Beauvoir, and the provocative Amantine Lupin, who became famous under the name George Sand. The article states that the current owner, Jean-Baptiste Hue, has turned the place back into a true literary café, continuing: *'At Procope, you can sample ice cream, brioches, petit fours, candied chestnuts, nougat, or angelica. Hue is also a very talented lemonade maker.'*.

Jean-Jacques regularly asks Johanna to look up titles with reports from the American States. He learns, for example, that the original Native American population is being increasingly driven from its territories by the advancing European immigrants and their descendants. People talk about the *Indian Territory* where the immigrants want to relocate the entire indigenous population, but which apparently encounters considerable resistance. Jean-Jacques follows with interest the story of the Jesuit Pierre-Jean Desmet, back in the country since 1833. He left for Maryland as a young priest and later devoted himself to studying Native American languages in Missouri. He, too, speaks of the pressure exerted by white Americans moving westward. This westward migration even seems to be causing considerable tension among the descendants of earlier European

immigrants in a large area known as Texas. Spanish-speaking immigrants from Mexico, French speakers from Louisiana, and English speakers from the East clash with each other. Jean-Jacques notes wistfully that people always and everywhere come into conflict as a result of the desire to possess. He recalls the utopian stories of those who do not seek possessions and do not consider wealth and status as their goal in life.

During the spring of 1835, some newspapers report that the State University of Leuven located in the buildings of the former *Universitas Studii Lovaniensis* will close. In its place will come the *Catholic University of Belgium* who moves from Mechelen to Leuven. Jean-Jacques naturally had his reservations about abolishing that important state university, which, in the span of just one generation attracted 8,000 students. Naturally, this involved an elite, largely formed by lecturers previously associated to the *Universitas* and the *Central School of Brussels.* All by all says Jean-Jacques, in the number of years corresponding to an academic career, a late medieval church educational institution with a humanist slant has been shut down, changed location and name, returned as a state institution, and now once again placed under ecclesiastical influence. He predicts to Johanna that this will permanently ignite the debate about the existence of neutrality in education, not only here but everywhere where schools exist. With the rise of liberal ideas of the separation of state and church, but not necessarily of state and religion, he says, it only becomes clearer that those in power have always wanted to maintain control over the population and now see schools and education as a

suitable means to this end.

Mid-August Johanna and Jean-Jacques read that the thirty-year-old Danish writer Hans Christian Andersen had published a collection of stories for children with the Danish title *Eventyr, fortalt for Børn (Fairy tales, told for children)*. Jean-Jacques would like to know if those *adventures told to children* whether or not are adapted fairy tales, and whether they are truly intended for children. He suspects that this Dane, like other authors who claim to write children's stories, compiles moral stories aimed at both adults and adolescents. When Johanna returns home a few days later, delighted with an English newspaper featuring an article about Andersen, she does not find her grandfather in his living room armchair, as usual. She immediately goes to his bedroom where she finds him delirious with fever in bed. She quickly calls a doctor friend. The doctor diagnoses a generalised abdominal infection caused by the lingering kidney disease of the past year. The acute kidney infection is causing Jean-Jacques excruciating pain. The doctor decides to administer an opium derivative. This sends Jean-Jacques into a restless sleep. Johanna remains sitting by his bedside, ready to take his sweating hands whenever he moves them toward her. By the evening of the 28th, his vision clears. He looks at his granddaughter and says, "A fairy tale about beings who know no money or power, that's possible. But our own world without money or power, that would be paradise. Would you like to think about that with me?" His gaze, which had been clear a moment ago, is glazed over again, and his breathing stops. Johanna feels it immediately. Suddenly, she's

lost her friend and confidante since she was five. She bursts into tears.

From Ostend to Moresnet

"Henri, do we have enough stock to supply the Meeûs factory?" asks Pierre.
"We have just enough left, but we'll have to stop at one of our marked sites to dig out another batch of bones," is the answer.
Henri and his friend Pierre have recently started a successful bone charcoal trade now that the *S.A. Raffinerie Nationale du Sucre indigène et exotique* is increasing its sugar production. White sugar extracted from beets is now a highly sought-after product. The refinery is a welcome source of income for young people after the dark years caused by the high-ranked authorities' demand for an independent Belgian state. Many factories went under when they were suddenly no longer allowed to supply the overseas territories of the *United Kingdom of the Netherlands*. The male workers, who in 1830 were still paid 2 francs a day for 13 hours of labour and could continue working, saw their wages drop to 62 centimes. There were too many people for too little work. And when hunger strikes, there's always someone who agrees to work for less than their neighbour.
It's cynical that the cholera epidemics of four and five years ago caused wages to rise again somewhat. But the suffering isn't over. What can a worker do with an annual wage of around 650 francs if, just to survive, one has to count on at least a hundred francs more per year? No, it remains utter misery. Women and

children earn extra money. This opens the door to more pub visits and drinking, which only exacerbates the misery. Oddly enough, Henri and his mother are doing much better than the working-class families around them. They still live off the produce of their small farm and regularly sell eggs, potatoes, and onions in the neighbourhood. For some time now, they've also keep a cow and even can supply rabbits.

Today there is also the new sugar factory where Pierre François Meeûs is in charge, while brother Ferdinand is the manager of the *Societé-General*. Henri doesn't know how the Meeûs family managed to get their hands on the former *Algemene Nederlandsche Maatschappij ter bevordering van de Volksvlijt [General Dutch Society for the Promotion of Popular Industry]* after the creation of Belgium, better known by its abbreviated name *Societé-General.* Not only did the family cleverly work their way up to control it, they also have strong ties to the royal family, primarily at the behest of the Rothschilds and Louis-Philippe. Leopold I, who initially had little sympathy for the Meeûs family, eventually yielded to the English bankers and his French father-in-law. The government however continues to thwart the family's plans to invest in the railways. The Senate ensures that the Brussels-French border line can't be outsourced to private investors. The king, who often wants to make decisions independently of the government, nevertheless fails to appoint Ferdinand Meeûs as Minister of State. Ultimately, he permanently ennobles the family with the transferable title of count.

Meanwhile, Henri is simply content with the contract for the

supply of bone char, which he can easily produce, not only from the bones of slaughtered cattle, which he can often obtain for free during emergency slaughters, but also with the raw material from his marked piles of human remains from the time the Waterloo Hill was built. The factory allows him to earn a good amount of money on the side, and although it is dirty work, it is less arduous than that of the workers who wash, scrape, and crush beets for a daily wage that fluctuates between one and a half francs for men, one franc for women, and fifty centimes for children. Fortunately for him, the beets are grown in parts of by the *Societé-Generale* reclaimed Sonian Forest far from his mother's farm. Harvesting beets from the rich clay? No thanks, Henri thinks.

The proceeds from the sale of bone charcoal enable Henri and Pierre to occasionally travel to Brussels, just as Henri did in the past.

In the capital, there are clearly distinct worlds. First and foremost, there's the affluent bourgeoisie seeking ties with the old and new nobility. Liberals and conservatives each move in their own intellectual circles. Hanne Greysel feels at home among the Mosselman family's friends. They discuss the modernisation of the country and the new railway lines that are expanding rapidly. After Brussels, Mechelen, and Antwerpen, Ghent and Leuven now also have a railway station. The Mosselman family's friends, with industrial ambitions throughout most of the country, can't wait for this railway expansion to grow fast enough. It facilitates the supply of raw materials and the marketing of products in places where river

barges can't dock or where no river or canal connections are available. The Mosselman circle initially looked askance at the entire Belgian independence adventure. Initially, independence seemed detrimental to the interests of patriarch Mosselman. After all, he could have very nearly shifted Prussian claims to Moresnet and its zinc spar mining by convincing Willem I to purchase the 330 hectares of Moresnet and make it his personal property. The sudden Belgian independence made impossible that purchase. Kelmis retained its status as *condominium*. The zinc mine provides work and attracts workers. François-Dominique saw Emile as his successor in managing the mine. But he was run over and killed by a fiacre in Paris in 1832 after which Alfred becomes François' right arm. With his children, he has the *Vieille-Montagne Zinc Mining and Smelting Company* founded. His cousin, also brother-in-law Théodore, who recently became a widower and inherited the estate *Le Chenoy* from his father is a banker like his uncle. With Meeûs he is raising capital for this new business model described as a *public limited company, a S.A.*. Also the *Bank of Belgium* will invest in the *S.A.* which mines zinc in three places, including Moresnet.

But Brussels also has working-class parishes where Henri and his friends like to hang out. The young people there are often just looking for entertainment that can hardly be described as intellectual. Yet, every now and then Henri goes to listen to one of those young liberal guys talking about the length of the working day, the need to establish schools, and the taxes that stand in the way of parliamentary representation. Recently there was a discussion about the situation in France. There seems to

be disagreement about the policy of the once so popular King Louis Philippe after the deposition of Charles X. Opinions are divided about the king's attitude toward Louis Napoleon, nephew of the *'Waterloo-Napoleon'*. The elder Napoleon had wanted to start his own dynasty, which proved difficult after the defeat at Waterloo. Exiled in 1815 and declared illegal in 1830, any descendant who claimed the throne could be sentenced to death. And yet… When Louis Napoleon announced the previous year in Strasbourg that he intended to do so, Louis Philippe pardoned him and sent him into exile in the North of America. That would lead to trouble, Henri's friends claimed.

Both Henri's activities and the events in high places, of which Johanna's mother is quite well aware, pass her by. Distraught by her grief over the loss of what she considered her true father, she continues to live in Oostende for a while until it is clear that she has the right to use the spacious house on Kapellestraat. To arrange everything legally and possibly claim her inheritance, however, she must try to contact her brother, about whom she knows little. He supposedly lives in Brussels. She will undoubtedly feel compelled to visit her mother. One of the uncles, Greysel, from Bruges, provides her with Hanne's last known address. Johanna is able to rent the house on Kapellestraat at a reasonable price. She retains the right to a room and the use of the living room, and the rent allows her to cover her needs for the time being. Johanna also rings the doorbell at Keizerskaai. After Jean-Jacques' death, she receives a great deal of support from Gertrude, who still lives there with one of her sons and his family. Although the Schoolhouse no

longer exists, the library remains. Gertrude's son, Omer, is in charge of it. On the one hand, Johanna would like her grandfather' library and writings to find a home here, and on the other, she is curious about that library, which ultimately has its origins in her own family. Together with Omer, she spends several hours cataloging Jean-Jacques' diaries, learning more about the authors who had benefited her family, and Omer's parents as well, so much during the Schoolhouse adventure. She rereads her father's and grandfather's notes on Pestalozzi's paternalism toward poor children while taking notes in *Die Menschenerziehung, die Erziehungs-, Unterrichts- und Lehrkunst, angestrebt in der allgemeinen deutschen Erziehungsanstalt zu Keilhau [The education of people, the art of education, teaching and teaching, pursued in the general German educational institution in Keilhau]* by Friedrich Fröbel. From Omer she hears how the former Pestalozzi student started a daycare, play, and activity center for young children in Bad Blankenburg this year. Although Johanna sometimes finds Fröbel's clearly religious leanings exaggerated, she understands that this son of an orthodox Lutheran pastor naturally incorporates his religious background into his thinking. She wonders how Fröbel develops his ideas about childrearing in his activity center. She thinks of a passage she read, in which the man writes: *'To avoid physical effeminacy, the child's bed should be less soft from the beginning. It should therefore consist of pillows made of hay, seaweed, fine straw, chaff, or at most horsehair, but not feathers. Likewise, the child should be only lightly covered while sleeping and exposed to the influence of the fresh air.'* She imagines a communal sleeping

area with open windows and hard mattresses. She pauses for a moment on the word 'effeminacy'. Was Fröbel thinking of an activity center just for boys? Or is he using the word with a different meaning? Furthermore, the text addresses the need to keep children occupied, to stimulate their minds. And that could very well apply to both boys and girls: '*With the developed activity of the child's senses, body and limbs, in which it begins to represent the inner self to the outer world through its own action, the 'infant' stage ends and the childhood stage begins*.'

Up to that point, the inner nature of man is still a unity without members, without multiplicity.

'*To prevent a child from feeling abandoned in bed before getting to sleep, and especially after waking up, with nothing to occupy them, it's advisable to hang a birdcage in the child's natural line of sight. This stimulates and nourishes the child's senses and mind in many ways*.' Johanna can't suppress a laugh: would a dormitory have a birdcage like that hanging above every bed? It better not all be thrushes, larks, or nightingales, otherwise the children wouldn't sleep at all…

From Omer, Johanna hears about Karl Fröbel, Friedrich's cousin. She begins corresponding with him when she learns that he works at a Pestalozzi school in England, where he has been teaching mathematics for several years. Karl is almost thirty and is the third son of Pastor Johann Michael Christoph Fröbel. His father died in 1813, after which his uncle took him and his brothers in. Influenced by Friedrich's pedagogical work, Karl also developed teaching ambitions. He first studied philosophy in Jena and now teaches mathematics. In terms of faith, he

differs from his grandfather and father, who were both Lutheran ministers. From him, Johanna learns that Friedrich is currently only interested in toddlers and that he is thinking of making geometry and arithmetic understandable to them, using special toys. Karl Fröbel explains that he himself sees the development of children as a human, not a divine, task. Johanna confides that she comes from a family that has always worked with believers from diverse backgrounds with cosmopolitan tolerance, but cannot be called deistic or atheistic. Her grandparents generally adopted the stance that the existence of higher powers cannot be scientifically proven. Therefore, they could not be convinced of God's existence, but also of his non-existence. This, in turn, led them to be tolerant towards everyone and never adopted a paternalistic or condescending attitude regarding the faith of others. She also admits she sometimes struggles with this herself, especially when confronted by someone who decides on the lives of others in the name of his own religion. As a young woman, she often feels the conservative Catholic pressure to abandon her self-education and quickly marry a man who can support her.

It was likely through correspondence with Karl that Johanna learned about Bishop John Purcell of Cincinnati and his remarks about the unique position of Christians regarding the content of an emerging nonsectarian curriculum for public schools. He is said to have said, *'In a religious coalition, Protestants have nothing to lose, whatever the outcome of the experiment. In such a curriculum, the so-called creeds are so ambiguously defined that adding or subtracting half a dozen dogmas cannot destroy their*

identity. Except, of course, that one of the accepted doctrines should be atheism! We know that we have a creed that can only exist in its integrity. Therefore, we cannot meet atheists on equal footing.'
Johanna ponders this statement for a long time. The least you can say is that it implies a superiority over non-Christians. She finds it hard to believe this is a tolerant attitude. She herself sees it as a condescending attitude.
Johanna discusses her interest in child development and a plan gradually takes shape to visit Friedrich Fröbel in Bad Blankenburg. Karl advises her to write to his uncle and mention their correspondence. Although uncle and nephew have different worldviews, they both agree on the importance of children's development in their early years.
Meanwhile, Johanna sees that the generalisation of education does not reflect Comenius' intention, much less the humanist ideas of her great-grandparents and grandparents. In Oostende public schools are just like elsewhere, schools for the poor; just look at the free boys' school that opened its doors on Ooststraat. In Witte Nonnenstraat, another school opened under the name *House of Child Jesus* This institution will grow into a nursery school and an elementary school with paying classes for the middle class. Johanna notes that the toddlers are just "parked" in the nursery school. It is certainly no play or activity institute.

Johanna often talks to Omer about how correspondence and study broaden the mind and, moreover, enable one to stay abreast of advances in science and knowledge. But is that possible for everyone? New inventions that were supposed to make work easier don't do so. Consider Faraday's experiments.

His research into the varying forces of magnetic fields led him, and later others, to the discovery that a change in such a field generates an electric current. Hippolyte Pixii based his power generator on this, which became known as the dynamo, while Charles Page in America used it to create a new type of electric motor. Johanna wonders whether these new energy sources will be a good or a bad thing for the workers and their children. The steam engine was also supposed to make work easier, as people said at the time. And perhaps, for some, it did. But at the same time, these machines increased the workload and channeled new hordes of poor workers to more production sites and deeper mines.

Although there is a lot of experimentation with electricity, it is the steam engine that is replacing horses almost everywhere. Exactly three years to the day after Jean-Jacques' death, the steam engine transports wagons back and forth from Brussels to Oostende. The Bruges-Oostende connection was recently completed but the station is still quite some distance from the city center. Nevertheless, the Oostende-Brussels line is already in operation.

Over the past three years, Johanna has found new discussion partners on Keizerskaai to stimulate her intellectual development although she increasingly thinks about traveling to Brussels. She still doesn't quite know what she will do, but she does want to find her mother and brother before embarking on a possible overseas adventure as some of her conversation partners suggest. She is uncompromising and could easily emigrate to the Union of America via Great Britain, as so many

young migrants from around the world are doing.

Around the same time that Johanna decides to move to Brussels to find her family, which would enable and settle the inheritance of Kapellestraat, Wilhelm Molly is born in Blasbach. At the time no one could know that he would later become a doctor in Kelmis, in Neutral Moresnet.

Commissioners continue to be appointed for the minuscule *condominium* in Kelmis the governments of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Prussia are still arguing about. For the past four years, the Belgian representative has increased the number to three. And now that Limburg has been divided by the Belgian and Dutch governments, there is talk of a *four country point* in Vaals. This strengthen the residents of Kelmis' belief that their region would achieve independence. The division of Limburg was primarily the result of continuing friction between the Catholic south and the authoritarian Protestant king. The conflict with the French-speaking bourgeoisie in Flanders played a smaller role. Ultimately, the latter is not entirely opposed to William I. In Ghent, for example, no one is particularly pleased with the new division between the Southern and Northern Netherlands, which once again makes the seaport an international affair.

Furthermore, traders are still concerned about the unequal markets since the partition. And in the Catholic South, there is also unease about Pope Gregory XVI's absolute condemnation of the slave trade. Protestant northerners are not bothered by excommunication or anathema, the thinking goes. It has not been since Pius VII that the church has taken such an absolute

stand, and among the owners of Europe, economics apparently carries more weight than ethics.
Johanna hears little about this when she arrives in Brussels.
She moves in with her grandmother's cousin. After much inquiry, she learns that a Hanne Greysel is regularly seen in salon gatherings with prominent Brussels families. One winter afternoon in late 1839, Johanna and her cousin attend a performance of Rossini's *Barber of Seville*. In the foyer, she finally meets her mother. Although Johanna immediately recognises her, she doesn't recognise her daughter. Hanne hasn't visited her daughter since she was seven and now envisions a tall, twenty-two-year-old young woman. After some hesitation, Hanne agrees to visit Johanna the next day and bring Leopold along. The meeting is rather awkward. Although Leopold and Johanna share some interest, Johanna senses that Hanne doesn't appreciate the advances. Her mother is well-established among the Brussels upper middle class, including many figures close to the government. She finds Johanna's interest in the education of the common people misplaced. This interest is something she clearly inherited from her grandfather and his family. She explains rather coolly to Johanna that all this revolutionary talk won't amount to anything, and certainly not to any money. Shortly after this visit, Leopold and Johanna have notarised that the former makes no claim to any inheritance from the Lemaîtres. Johanna will never see her mother again. Later in life, she does reconnect with Leopold.

From that moment on, Johanna delved deeper into Fröbel's work with toddlers and preschoolers. Since last year, the

pedagogue has been using the word *Kindergarten (the children's garden)* when he talks about the play and activity institute he founded with Middendorf and Langethal. Johanna knows what he means by *Fröbel gifts.*These are geometric building blocks and activity blocks with a specific pattern. What fascinates Johanna most is the way Friedrich Fröbel places children's activity at the center of their development. He talks about *Freiarbeit* (free work) and describes how play is fundamental in childhood and has educational value in itself. In the *Kindergarten* the children sing, dance, and garden. They are also encouraged to play independently with the Fröbel gifts.

Through her contacts with Fröbel and his followers, Johanna hears that in some of the American states work is being done on a public community school or *common school.* Horace Mann, the openly anti-slavery lawyer, began a few years ago with a *Common School Journal.* He proposes six principles: the people must no longer remain ignorant; popular education must be paid for, supervised, and maintained by an interested public; this education should best be provided in schools that accept children from diverse backgrounds; this education must be nonsectarian; this education must be conducted according to the principles of a free society; well-trained, professional teachers must be employed for this education. According to Johanna's correspondents, Horace Mann is said to have claimed: '*The court is no longer my forum. My jurisdiction has changed. I abandoned jurisprudence and moved into the more general realm of mind and morality. I found the current generation to be made of almost intractable raw material and am about to attribute my*

efforts to the next. Men are made of cast iron, but children are made of wax. What might be effective when applied to the latter will not impress the former.' More generally, there seems to be even broader interest in replacing the charity school model with publicly funded schools. These community schools would be open to everyone, not just poor children. The same class includes young people from various economic, religious, and ethnic groups. But Christian theologians remain vigilant. Johanna, for example, hears about Horace Bushnell, who says that all Christians must give the Bible its proper place and not give in to religious sectarianism in schools. The Bible itself, says Bushnell, is the book of principles, the moral standard. And no other authority is needed.

Of course, Johanna thinks, that is a Protestant view of non-sectarianism. *Common school* or *Charity school?* In the new American states, a school war seems to be underway between Protestants and Catholics. Ultimately, Johanna thinks, there's a similarity to what went wrong in the Southern Netherlands when her grandfather enrolled her in the national primary school. The conservative Catholics couldn't get along with the Protestant Dutch, led by an enlightened despot. To this day, the *Common School* for *public education for everyone* proposes to separate school from *religious education for believers* and therefore no *subdivisions of each faith* have to provide. This would make it more difficult to bring together different beliefs in a single school.

It remains a difficult task according to Johanna and her Ostend friends. If one wants to design the public school as the most

powerful agency for promoting the democratic cohesion of a nation consisting of people who are very different from one another, then that school must, by definition, be scrupulously protected from sectarian strife. To protect the community from divisive conflicts, to protect the government from pressure from religious groups, censorship, and coercion, however subtle, the State must adhere to a non-religious model of education and protect education from indoctrination, even from the nation's chosen faith.

In one of their letters, Johanna's friends write about the experience of good and evil. The occasion is the latest publication by Liebaert, the same man who wrote a hymn to the Dutch King Willem for the *Ostend Chamber of Rhetoric*. This time, he apparently opted for more local heroes from earlier times. He wrote the play *Lodewijk Van Male or Abuse of Greatness and Power.* Performed in Oostende in October 1841, the story itself is a kind of moral fairy tale with good and bad characters. The good Lodewijk continues to meet his first love, Helena, after promising to marry the noble Margaret. His faithful knight, Conrad, supports him in everything. Helena is rescued despite the evil plans made by bad Margaret. Jacob is a double faced. Each character in the play represents a specific flaw or virtue. Lodewijk is pride, Conrad is loyalty, Helena honour, Margareta revenge, Jacob treachery. It's a sad story, as is often the case with these kinds of stories says Omer. He suspects that Liebaert, as the city treasurer and administrator of almshouses, surely knows how the world works. He is certainly familiar with the fact that when it comes to morality and romantic relationships, there is a

vast difference between the very strict sexual rules of Catholic moralists and the bourgeoisie and the much less strict rules of the nobility, both past and present. But here he's clearly following the fashionable trend for staging a play. Perhaps this play is nothing more than a different approach to parenting, even for adults, says one of Johanna's friends. Behind a simple play, Catholic and bourgeois lies a clearly morality. The watching bourgeoisie can easily transfer the enacted events to their own circles. According to Omer, the play also gives a hint to those belonging to the working class. Their role is and remains to submissively serve the ruling class and the Church so as not to suffer the fate of the false double face Jacob.

Johanna points out that the national primary school from the period of the *United Kingdom of the Netherlands* is perhaps an agency that promotes tolerance and democracy, and that the rarely performed pieces such as *Lodewijk Van Male* a kind of paradoxical expression of that tolerance. The same cannot be said of *Le Journal de Bruxelles* which has been published since January of this year. Its founder is the longtime opponent of King Willem I Dieudonné Stas. Johanna knows the Bishop of Bruges and his brother, the Catholic minister Jules Malou, are patrons of the newspaper. The magazine is an arrogant and influential mouthpiece for the Belgian nobility and has absolutely no interest in a democratic, heterogeneous society.

Meanwhile, Johanna is preparing for her visit to Prussia. She wants to see Fröbel's *Kindergarten* with her own eyes. She increasingly understands the dangerous interplay between an arrogant, conservative, religious government and the charity

school of Lasalle, modeled on the Lancastrian model. European states with constitutional monarchies and conservative aristocratic governments have clearly chosen this option. Such a solution doesn't combat popular ignorance, but rather fosters it. She read a whole library of examples on the Keizerskaai…

Spring 1842 is approaching. Johanna is sitting with her cousin and her cousin's friend at Muntplein, having coffee. The friend is enthusiastically discussing the railway expansion: "This year, stations will be added in Liège, Manage, Mouscron, Tournai, and Quiévrain. Slowly but surely, we'll be heading towards Paris and reaching Aachen, Cologne, and Berlin. For London, you can already combine train, boat, and stagecoach! And if you want to go to Oostende, Johanna, just look and see. The stagecoach takes over 12 hours. The much more comfortable boat from Ghent to Bruges still takes almost 10 hours. By train, you can now travel from Brussels via Mechelen and Bruges to your hometown in a good five hours!"
"Actually, Johanna's hometown is Bruges, not Oostende," her cousin notes. "And for the rest, Johanna, I should add that such a train journey only is comfortable if you travel in the first-class car, and then it's not that cheap…"
"Do you think the railway will become a general transport network?" asks Johanna.
"Absolutely," says her cousin's friend. "Just think how, nowadays, everywhere in Europe, but also beyond, the production of profiles and rods for the construction of those railways increases and how more and more steam engines are being built. Where there are no canals to transport goods, the railway is the

solution: coal is transferred from a barge to wagons, which are then pulled by an engine. It's a much better means of transportation than a horse-drawn cart. The railway is the future!

The railway is the future… For the next few decades, at least, the railway will come to shape people's lives far more than the three of them can imagine today. The railway will provide a uniform time system. It will be a source of inspiration for new storytellers. Fourteen-year-old Jules Verne, who dreams of travel, though destined to study law, will take out of it some of his inspiration. And in Saxony, Karl, the fifth child of the poor May weaver family, is born. Much later, Johanna will hear about his first five childhood years, spent blind, listening to his grandmother's fairy tales. After a failed attempt to become a teacher, he will write stories in which railways play a major role. The railway and the emerging connection to major seaports allowed for ever-larger production units, and factories that force workers to sell their labour for starvation wages lays the foundation for the rapidly emerging moneyed aristocracy.

Johanna thinks about what she wrote about this in her letter to her Prussian friends that she just took to the post office: '*Working-class children are still forced to go to work with their parents at a very young age. Pedagogy remains a matter for children who do not come from the working class.*' In it, she announces her travel plans for her visit to Bad Blankenburg and Keilhau. She truly hopes to draw inspiration from the children gardens and, who knows, perhaps even build on the work of her grandparents and great-grandparents.

When Johanna opens the front door, she immediately hears the visit. Perhaps her cousin's boyfriend. But she also hears another man's voice. She walks into the living room and is met by a pair of blue eyes gazing at her cheerfully. The owner of the eyes introduces himself as Henri Teacher. Johanna's cousin explains that Henri works for a sugar factory near Waterloo.

"I don't work, I supply," Henri corrects with a laugh. "If I were to work there, I wouldn't even have the money to move to Brussels." But when Johanna asks what exactly he supplies, Henri remains vague: "Raw material for sugar production."

The conversation turns to a meeting that Henri and her cousin's boyfriend apparently attended. It was announced that a law has been passed in England prohibiting children under 16 from being employed as chimney sweeps. Johanna is immediately interested and asks for more information.

"It was already known, thanks to the *Children's Employment Commission* considered too many children were being employed to maintain the chimneys, often causing accidents. That's now coming to an end," says Henri.

"Well," his friend continues, "that can all come to an end if people actually comply with the law. And to ensure that, we need inspectors…"

"Ironically, it can be harder to prevent parents from allowing their children to do dangerous work than it is for employers to do it," says Henri. "This is also the case in Belgium. I recently heard workers using inflammatory language against inspectors who expressed concern about the health of children employed in factories. These inspectors relied on doctors' testimony for this."

“But the employers aren’t wimps. They do listen to the doctors’ diagnoses, not so much out of concern for the children themselves, but to safeguard the factory’s profits. Young workers who are unable to work too often or too quickly reduce production and therefore profits,” Henri’s friend notes cynically.”
“That is of course true,” Henri agrees, “but it remains difficult to convince parents not to send their children to the factory if that is the only way to put more food on the table.”
“Or to have some extra money for going to the pub,” Johanna’s cousin joins the conversation. “The parish priest recently delivered a sermon against the degenerate fathers who send their children to the factory to ensure their Sunday pub visits.”
“Well,” says Henri, “even our imported Majesty is worried. In his speech from the throne, he suggested a bill to protect children working in factories. That’s to his credit, of course, but he doesn’t go so far as to clearly state that factories are no place for any child.”
“Every child’s place should be the *Kindergarten*,” Johanna believes. When Henri looks up in surprise, she explains what she means and shares what she knows about Fröbel.
“But that *Kindergarten* isn’t what the current public school system is supposed to be about, is it?” asks Henri. “Because I have a feeling the sudden interest for children to be in schools has more to do with how liberals and Catholics want to get a handle on today’s children who are tomorrow’s workers.”
“Isn’t the proposal to pass an education law and oblige municipalities to have at least one primary school of their own a good idea?” asks Johanna’s cousin.

“If that would lead to the generalisation of *kindergartens*, I would say yes,” Johanna thinks, “but if I understand Henri, then I would say that it could also be about a battle between rivals.”
“Or to shift money to whoever actually owns the schools, by turning them into a kind of free municipal school,” Henri adds.
“Explain this,” asks Johanna.
“Well, there’s an education law in the works, but it doesn’t stipulate compulsory schooling or school attendance. The Belgian Constitution enshrines complete freedom of education, but that means the freedom to establish schools. This is primarily a reaction to the State Schools from the time of the *United Kingdom of the Netherlands*. Just as before the French occupation, many schools are now linked to the church or a Catholic monastery. If these initiatives suddenly become municipal schools, the state will provide funding to those schools when they admit children whose parents can’t afford the tuition. This creates a public school, partly funded by the secular government but controlled by a non-secular government.

Over the next two weeks, Johanna and Henri see each other regularly. They mainly talk about the living conditions of working-class children, and Johanna quickly understands that she has a lot to learn from Henri in that regard. All in all, it’s abundantly clear to her that she herself was raised in a bourgeois environment and that she was afforded opportunities for education and development not afforded to most working-class boys, let alone girls. Henri talks about his childhood in Waterloo and the construction of the famous hill. Johanna discusses her ideas for educational work. One day, she also

mentions that she found the letters in the library on Keizerskaai in which her great-grandfather explains the diagram on arrogance and ignorance. Henri is very enthusiastic about that. He says he wants to discuss it with friends someday, and he'd like to introduce Johanna to them. It's also during this conversation that he asks her if she's ever heard of Moresnet.

"Moresnet, *Calamine*?" Johanna asks in surprise. "Isn't that the place my mother's wealthy acquaintances sometimes talk about?"

"*Calamine*, right. The name of the zinc mineral from the local mine gave the place's name. Where the Belgian banking sector invested big money. But did you know that Moresnet is still a *condominium*. It's even called the *Free State of Moresnet*! Where not Belgian law, but the Napoleonic Code applies... at least, for those born there."

"Why are you telling me about this?"

"Because I know that in a few days you will be visiting your beloved pedagogue, and because I also know that you are leaving behind a young man here whom you would like to speak of '*my beloved Johanna*' …" Henri interrupts his sentence when he suddenly sees Johanna blush.

She takes his hands in hers and asks softly: "and…?"

"…and," he continues, a little more confidently, "if you come back and want to look for me, you might find me there, if I'm not in Waterloo or Brussels. It's a kind of refuge, you know, where neither the Belgian nor the Prussian security services can operate."

"Henri, is there anything else I should know about you? I'm not

hiding the fact that I enjoy your company, but are you doing something that is unacceptable?"
"No immoral activity whatsoever, Johanna, but you know me well enough now to know that my views on the relationship between rich and poor don't align with official Belgian views. You know that the working class has had very difficult years and has even more difficult ones ahead. Two years ago, there was a real famine in the country. And what was the reaction? The royal entourage explained that the solution lay in sending out colonists, as in previous centuries. The king supports these plans. So, efforts are being made to purchase concessions in Guatemala. People spoke about Vera Paz, now about Santo Tomas. A year and a half ago, the *Belgian Colony Society* was founded with the intention of populating those areas. A drop in the ocean. Anyway, I'd rather go to Moresnet and continue to strive there for something other than a society where arrogant rich people send ignorant losers to the other side of the world with false promises."
After a pause, Johanna looks Henri straight in the eyes and says, "When I get back, I'll look for you, Henri Teacher! In Brussels, in Waterloo, or wherever you are. I'll look for you, and afterwards I won't let you go anytime soon. If you're okay with that, make sure my cousin knows where you are, and if you're still okay with that, now you can embrace me as long as you like."

During her stay in the *Kindergartens* from Keilhau and Bad Blankenburg, Johanna hears how big factory owners in Belgium argue against attempts to incorporate compulsory school attendance into school legislation. These paternalistic protectors

of the working class are not willing to approve such compulsory school attendance. Child labour, they argue, keeps children on the straight and narrow because it keeps them less aimless and, moreover, provides an additional source of income. Many argue that it's better to employ children than women, so women have more time to manage the household. Those around cynically remark these arguments are false. Children in school aren't aimless, and children are paid even lower wages than women, so the owners are increasing their profits through child labour. Johanna also explains the opportunism inherent in the fact that, after independence, many public schools closed again at the insistence of the conservative Catholic Church. Now that the State due to last year's education legal regulations can finance free and municipal schools if they include poor children, liberal factory owners and the Catholic Church are arguing over the ownership of workers' children.

Meanwhile, the government did decide to reopen the state teacher training college in Lier to train its own teachers for the municipal schools. Father Philip De Coster is appointed director. He is a teacher at the minor seminary and recruits priests for the teacher training college to ensure the teachers' moral development. When her hosts ask why the director had to be a Catholic priest, Johanna explains that well-trained people to lead a teacher training college in Catholic Belgium are difficult to find in non-religious circles.

Halfway through her learning year, Johanna receives a letter from Henri. He tells how he visited Johanna's cousin, not to tell her where he was staying, but to ask where she was staying at

the moment so they could take up their conversations again. It's now very clear to her that he's deeply in love with her, and that she finds it very pleasant. She pays close attention to the passage where he writes: 'I heard that our aristocracy is not abandoning its colonisation plans. Three ships recently set sail for Guatemala. Besides the *Ville de Bruxelles* and the *Theodore* from Antwerp and Ghent, the *Louise Marie* will sail from your adopted city of Oostende. Incidentally, it seems that the ship's namesake, the spouse of the King of the Belgians, is spending more and more time in Oostende. Apparently, the colonists are being offered a kind of paradise, where they will prosper and will not have to work hard themselves. Will they once again spin a narrative of Christian supremacy to make slave labour morally acceptable? Or will they draw a parallel with the glory of Spain, Portugal, France, and England to glorify the supremacy of Europeans? Meanwhile, in Ghent's inns, young and old alike are singing loudly and mockingly:

Who is going to Verrepa?
Were there is no need for working
Only for leisure, eating and drinking
And like the pigs all will be sleeping.

I still think Moresnet is better than Vera Paz…'

Henri further elaborates on the consequences of the arrogant lust for power and money of generations of British colonists and traders. He writes: *'Do you remember when I told you how the British, through corruption and smuggling, were gradually transporting more and more opium produced in India to China? Ten years ago, the equivalent of almost three times the entire*

Belgian population was already addicted to it. Now, this trade is causing enormous profits in silver for British traders and a considerable headache for the Chinese rural aristocracy. They are feeling the drain on the trade balance all too well, after previous years of huge profits, mainly from tea and lacquerware. I hear that, meanwhile, the population has increased dramatically in large parts of the country. With a surplus of labour and lower incomes, landowners are paying significantly less to the working population. Apparently, the Chinese provinces are not lacking in gangs of robbers. But the story I heard has to do with Edwin Stevens. Stevens is a Protestant missionary and published the book Goede Woorden ter Aansporing van de Tijden [Good Words to Encourage the Times]. *A gift from the Chinese evangelist Liang Fa to Hong Renkun, the son of a landowner with ambitions to become a civil servant. After failing a civil service exam, Hong supposedly received visions, which he interpreted in Christian terms, borrowing them from that book. The result: today he claims to be the younger brother of Jesus Christ. I'm trying to find out more about this man. Will it remain just his visions, or will there be a sequel?'*."

At the end of 1843, Johanna returns from far-off Keilhau. Her journey occurs largely by train. From Weimar, she goes to Magdeburg and from there to Cologne. The connection to Aachen had recently been extended to the border crossing with Belgium. By the end of the year, it was already possible to travel via Verviers to Liège and from there on to the capital. But Johanna doesn't have to travel that far. In Herbestal (or Herbesthal, as they called it in the German Empire), she

disembarks, where an overjoyed Henri is waiting for her. Together, they cover the ten kilometers that separate the station from *Calamine* in a *carriage* which Henri borrowed from one of his new friends.

Living in the margins

Family tradition says that Johanna and Henri found each other again in *Calamine* in December 1843. The laws of nature seem to indicate that Johanna's arrival could certainly not have been much later… In August 1844 their son is born and registered by the mayor of *Calamine* as a new native of Neutral Moresnet. He is given the name Frederick. The choice of this name is not unrelated to Johanna's contacts with Friedrich Fröbel and his work.

The young family is doing quite well. Henri has liquidated all his possessions in the Waterloo area and bought himself out of his bone charcoal business. With this, he leases a farm and its land near the road that connects *Calamine* with the Belgian Moresnet. He sells most of his agricultural products on the market of *Kelmis* or *Calamine*. Thanks to the mediation of her Ostend friends, Johanna has rented the house on Kapellestraat on an annual basis to a wealthy Brussels family who, following in the footsteps of the Court, have made Oostende a relaxing place to stay, were they regularly attend concerts and balls in the rooms on the upper floor of the town hall, which have been converted into a casino.

The daily life of *Calamine* of course mainly revolves around zinc mining under concession of the *Vieille-Montagne Zinc Mining*

and Smelting Company. The current managers of the company are gradually providing a number of amenities: there are workers' houses, a Catholic church and a Protestant chapel, and a nursing home. Entertainment is also provided: those who wish can join a shooting club, a brass band, a carnival club, or gymnastics club.

Johanna wonders if the *Vieille-Montagne Company* might be interested in a local *Kindergarten*. She makes the necessary contacts and proposes a children's activity center that she can operate herself in a barn adapted for this purpose and on a section of the uncultivated land of the tenant farm. While she is working on this, she hears about the plans of *Vieille-Montagne* to start a municipal school in line with Belgian educational legislation. She draws attention to the work of Diesterweg, recalling the initiatives of *Vieille-Montagne* to support both the Catholic and Protestant faiths. She writes: '*Your initiative has led me to bring Adolph Diesterweg to your attention. He is a defender of nonsectarian religious education. Those who reflect on conflicts often arrive at two main dividing lines, such as authority versus freedom, or Catholicism versus Protestantism. Diesterweg proposes to avoid political and religious influence in schools and viewing the educational process more as a general development. I believe that, like the directors of the Société des Mines et Fonderies de Zinc de la Vieille-Montagne, he is concerned with the well-being of people. He states, among other things, that one should educate people first and foremost, without worrying about their vocational training or their lineage. Both factory workers and farmers must be educated as human beings. He further proposes that schools should have a*

certain autonomy regarding church and state.'

Among themselves, Johanna and Henri discuss another aspect of Diesterweg's ideas.

He publishes in *Reinischer Blätter* says Johanna. "And in it I read that when he talks about the poor, he doesn't differentiate between young people and adults. That distinction is indeed made in the ideas about education in bourgeois circles."

"Does that mean that there are educators who see a greater danger in conflicts between different classes than between different generations?" asks Henri.

I think conflicts between generations arise in all classrooms if they aren't addressed educationally. And here I think education is necessary, because otherwise, the knowledge of previous generations simply won't be understood. The conflict should be positive, I think, in the sense that it encourages reflection on issues and their evolution.

"So, education to manage the conflict between generations, but not education to manage the conflict between classes? Or education to portray this conflict as pointless? The rich have always wanted to present themselves as protectors of the poor, while they shamefully exploit them…" Henri refutes.

Johanna laughs. "Apparently you have plenty of time to read *Le Débat Social*, now that the magazine arrives from Brussels quite regularly. It's directly accessible to the people Diesterweg wants to educate. But education would perhaps ensure that Lucien Jottrand, Adolphe Bartels, and the Delhasse brothers could be read by those they claim to care about. But perhaps that's not their intention? Perhaps they're simply more interested, like

humanists of old, in initiating polemics within their small circle about how to improve the world for others without compromising themselves? Or perhaps they're seeking to expand their intellectual circle, including that German philosopher who recently settled in Brussels and whom you sometimes mention."
"You probably mean Karl Marx," Henri replies. "Yes, I know that good intentions can also be arrogant. Perhaps those who have it easier, who have time to think, don't yet have enough faith in what a non-sectarian education can do to bring people who differ from each other to agreement. But I do have reservations about the effect of personal wealth accumulation."

Fifty-five years have passed since the French Jacobins sought to spread their Phrygian cap throughout Europe. In France itself, established aristocracy and opportunistic newcomers have alternated in attempts to impose their power structures on the population. Ironically, it is in Neutral Moresnet that one of the most famous civil codes from that Jacobin revolution remains in use without modification: the Code Napoleon. Not because the Neutrals, born here since the inception of the *condominium* and without recognised nationality, chose for it, but because this was the simplest compromise for the commissioners overseeing the disputed territory for a form of administrative order over this 330-hectare area. Most minors from Neutral Moresnet work in the pit. The Napoleonic Code makes no mention of compulsory education. Nevertheless, the *Vieille-Montagne Zinc Mining and Smelting Company* establishes a school this year for the benefit of the children of the miners.

Johanna closely follows the opening of the school. It's certainly not a Fröbel model. Basic reading and writing instruction is provided, with German and French replacing the local dialect. She writes about this: *'It's a fantasy to think the company operating this enormous mine, employing hundreds of miners, would adopt a school model that offers children the opportunity to develop into anything other than just workers for the company. Moreover, the entire school structure is ambiguous, as the mine operators continue to send many children to the pit.'*."

"In another letter, to a publisher of school and 'children'-books, she writes: "*I heard that in Ghent the* Flemish Art Treasure for the use of primary schools, by Willequet, *was printed for the fifth time. I hereby instructed payment for a copy and its respective shipping*." But when she receives the book, she is disappointed. Although she now has access to Flemish texts, she feels the book has too much of a Catholic slant. She writes to Karl Fröbel about it. It takes a while before she receives a reply, not from England, but from Zurich, where he has since moved. He is not particularly surprised by the continuing influence of the church or religion on education. He refers to his uncle's texts, which provide a moral framework for the entire education and organisation of the *Kindergarten* and which are based on his uncle's faith in God. He also writes: "*I keep thinking about our conversations about the joint education of girls and boys. I started an educational institution here, which includes a kindergarten, with the aim of educating boys and girls together according to natural family methods. It's good to know that I'm now receiving public recognition as an educator. I want to further develop this*

proposal for family education and am considering a college for girls. I've discussed this with my uncle and with one of his students, Johanna Küstner, who currently works in Breslau. She's also interested in these ideas..'

It's not just school and raising children that keep Johanna and Henri busy now that they're living in neutral territory. Just like elsewhere in Europe, in Moresnet, the effects of the potato plague is being felt, causing additional hardship for many working-class families. The back roads through Neutral Moresnet, which facilitate the smuggling of locally distilled grain jenever, are also used for the clandestine trade of potatoes and flour. Henri knows he's in almost no danger when he allows one of his barns to be used as a warehouse for smuggling goods. The only champetter in the region certainly has more to do than comb the barns in search of jenever and other smuggled goods. As he himself says, Henri carelessly picks up a few grains from the vast fields that the elite in Paris and Brussels sowed not only in young Belgium but also here in *Calamine.*

"Henri, tell me again about your trade with the *S.A. Raffinerie Nationale du Sucre indigène et exotique* in Waterloo."

Henri is sitting in one of the local pubs, after the market.

"Ha, old buddy, you already know the story, right?"

"There's a newcomer here who's come down from over there."

"The story is simple," Henri begins, "In 1836, the Meeûs family established the refinery with their own and external capital, including from the *Societé-Générale.* Sugar beets were used there to make beet sugar, supplemented with cane sugar, as well as animal feed and alcohol. The beets came primarily from land

reclaimed in the Sonian Forest by the same *Societé-Générale* and sold to the company. As soon as the company began production in Waterloo, it needed large quantities of bone char, which we could provide. The supply of animal carcasses to make that char wasn't enough. So we also started supplying bone char from the bones of the mass graves we created when we cleared the area around the 1815 battlefield."

"Human bones? Shady business!"

"Look, everyone turned a blind eye, especially the managers… But it didn't last long for me… I made a pretty good living from it for a few years before I sold everything and came here."

"Well," says the newcomer, "all I can tell you is that you sold the place just in time. The company is practically dying. Just before I came here, I heard it was going bankrupt."

"I wonder if the investors themselves lost much from it," says Henri.

"Perhaps not," the innkeeper replies. "If they act as shrewdly as those who trade in zinc here… with that new figure *S.A.* or *Ltd*, watch out mates, you can make a lot of money with this."

"But only if you already have a lot of money to start with," laughs Henri.

"Yeah, that's not for us. More for Fanny and Charles!" someone remarks. There's some laughter.

"Hey Parisian, tell me about that famous Mosselman daughter," the innkeeper asks a good-looking older man to join the conversation.

"The beautiful Fanny open to everyone, just like her Charles, by the way," smirks the man who is addressed as a Parisian. "They

exagerated a bit in Paris, but in the meantime they have managed to convince quite a few wealthy Parisians to establish the *Bank of Belgium*. That bank has, in turn, invested heavily in such a new-fangled phenomenon, a *S.A.* that you know all too well: the *Vieille-Montagne Zinc Mining and Smelting Company*. Millions of francs are at stake. Old Mosselman is making a profit, dear Charles is the company's director. You'll also find the Brussels elite on the board, including De Brouckère and Morny. We won't mention Fanny's bedtime stories, but something else is interesting to know. Apparently, Prussia has finally agreed to leave the Moresnet mine alone. I could be wrong, but more mining is on the way. And all of it in the open air, using open-pit mining. That will attract people, including miners who prefer to work above ground!"

The newcomer, who had been listening attentively, now says: "Did you know that Meeûs, the sugar beet family, and Mosselman, the zinc mine family, don't just have public limited companies in common? Both families claim descent from the *Seven Noble Houses of Brussels*. So it's clearly the nobility speaking here, wielding considerable wealth and power."

The innkeeper looks at the man for a long time. "You seem well-informed… and to what do we owe that you're joining us here in Neutral Moresnet? A lack of interest in serving the Belgian army?"

There is a new widespread laughter.

"You could say it like that. Furthermore, the *State Security* got closer than I thought was good for my health."

"You're welcome here, friend," says Henri. "And what should we

call you?"
"Charles is the name, not *Lehon*, but *Lebon*. Let us drink one more to the free East."

The free East could also be called the Wild East, if looking at it from a Belgian perspective. Insignificant compared to the American Wild West, but still. 330 hectares with only one constable, an old Napoleonic Code with no authority over clandestine jenever distilleries, pubs and places of entertainment that have little or no legal regulations to comply with — it's a paradise for those who want peace of mind, not only freethinkers but also gamblers, smugglers, and those fleeing the law in neighbouring countries. At the time of Henri and his friends' pub conversations, that American Wild West had expanded with the Texas annexation, brought about by President John Tyler, despite pressure from anti-slavery opponents. In Moresnet, no such expansion is expectable…

In the spring of 1846, Frederick Teacher gained a sister. She is given the name Lut. Like for her brother her Belgian parents did not want to register her in Belgian Moresnet. So, the mayor registers her as one more Neutral in the birth registers of *Calamine*. While nursing their second child, Johanna is unable to do much, she uses the time to take care of her correspondence-
A rather philosophical correspondence with French friends about Auguste Comte makes her reflect on the mysteries brought about by love. Was it the death of Comte's muse, Clotilde, that turned his life upside down? She knows that, to

reinforce his ideas that positivism constitutes the essence of humanity, he sows a new kind of faith that, to guarantee the social organisation of every kind of individual will, replaces God's rule with Human rule. But what about a Religion of Humanity, a new religion without God, of which he immediately proclaims himself high priest, a cult that worships great men?
From Oostende, Johanna receives new data on child labour in Belgium. The count, conducted by the factories themselves, shows that one in five factory workers is a child. This mainly concerns children employed in weaving mills, steel mills, mining, tanning and pottery. These factories have no data on agriculture and cottage industries, so it's safe to say that many more children are forced into labor. Otherwise, in most factories, children work the same hours as adults: ten to twelve hours a day, six days a week.
Johanna and Henri regularly hear news from the association *l'Alliance* because Johanna exchanges letters with Jacob Kats. Before Belgian independence, he obtained a teaching diploma that was not recognised by the new Belgian state. He writes about the abuses in Belgium and his relationship with the radical minority of liberals, who publishes *Le Débat Social*. Johanna and Henri often read positions in it that align with their own. In her letters, Johanna also frequently refers to Victor Considerant, whom she heard speak with Henri in Liège shortly after her return from Germany. Henri is enthusiastic about the *Manifeste de la democratie au XIX siècle.* Meanwhile, the French philosopher has developed a mathematical solution for the proportional representation of a population in the legislative

chambers of a democratic state. Like his Belgian counterparts, he advocates universal suffrage. The German philosopher Karl Marx, who lives in Brussels, also endorses these ideas in *Le Débat Social*, to which he regularly contributes. In Moresnet, Johanna, Henri, and their friends are infected by the enthusiasm of these radical liberals and the followers of Charles Fourier. Reforms are dreamed of throughout Europe, as reports from various Italian cities and again from France are coming out demanding greater representation of all population groups in government and city administration.

But everywhere voices are also being raised against this dreamed-of and far-reaching liberalisation of popular representation.

Already at the beginning of the pontificate of Pius IX, regarded as a kind of liberal antithesis of his predecessor Gregory XVI, the general of the Society of Jesus Roothaan said: "Yes, we'll shout 'Viva Pio Nono' as long as he makes concessions, but if he can't make new ones and the rolling cart has to be stopped, there will certainly be a terrible creaking noise... You can tell Mr. Kersten that. Other countries will also feel severe concussions. Belgium, too, will experience its setbacks."

Even within the liberal movement itself, a split quickly emerged between the more conservative citizens who strived for less dependence on the Catholic Church in politics and those young troublemakers, readers and contributors of *Le Débat Social*. The first group, with politicians such as Verhaegen, Orts, Anspach take *l'Observateur Belge* in the hands in which they defend their positions, quickly becoming known as the doctrinaire liberal line.

Unexpectedly, Johanna hears Pierre-Jean Desmet mentioned again. She immediately recalls her grandfather's interest in this priest from Dendermonde. She hears about his journey west of the Rocky Mountains, an area the Americans called Oregon and the British called the Columbia District. He traveled to the Saskatchewan River, reaching the Cree, Chippewa, and Blackfoot Indian tribes. He generally had peaceful encounters with the native population and established several missions. According to Johanna, his spreading of the faith appears to have been less bloody than the consequences of the Mormon westward journey led by Joseph Smith. Incidentally, that journey cost Smith's own life. There are reports that he was killed by his opponents several years earlier. These days, Smith's followers seem to be increasingly occupying the region where the Ute and Shoshone people usually reside. Along with other immigrants from eastern America, this religious group is increasing the pressure on the local population. Anyone who has visited the region speaks of fierce confrontations and bloody battles between the indigenous and immigrant populations with completely different attitudes to life.

While Europeans and their descendants continue to occupy various parts of the world, using arrogant colonisation techniques, including the enslavement of non-Europeans, a new famine threatens Belgium and the surrounding area. Two years ago, it was the potato plague; last year, the grain harvest almost completely failed. The rising prices of flour and potatoes, combined with low wages, provide a suitable excuse for increased demands for better working conditions for the poorest

population. The railway network is expanding and now includes additional stations in Brussels, new ones in Hasselt and Roeselare. For several years now, a regular connection has been established from Oostende to Dover, provided by a Belgian company. There are plenty of channels to keep everyone informed about local riots and uprisings.

The faster connections are also moving towards *Calamine*, which enables Johanna and Henri to personally participate in Brussels with the protest movements whereby the *Association Democratique* is born near Café Le Cygne. On Brussels' Grand Place, Johanna and Henri repeatedly see two of the movement's founders, Lucien Jottrand and Karel Spilthoorn. The association's goal is to bring together all those committed to better participation by all segments of the population. There is also considerable interest from abroad, and the Grand Place resembles a small-scale Babel, where, in addition to French, German, and Dutch, people also hear Polish, Italian, and English spoken. Jottrand is the chairman of the new association, and the vice-chairman is the German Karl Marx. Johanna meets Jacob Kats, who is among the attendees. Adolf Bartels is also watching. As early as 1845, he advocated for a minimum wage, health insurance, and partial expropriation in exchange for compensation for industries vital to the state.

Until then, the various liberal organisations hadn't yet significantly affected the broader population. Many even considered them simply the realisation of what that segment of the bourgeoisie that distanced itself from Willem I had envisioned in 1830, when they voted for an independent

Belgium. But today, the atmosphere is grimmer. In East and West Flanders, a third of the population is dependent on the poor relief system. Food for the lower classes is extremely scarce. Famine is rife. A deadly typhoid epidemic has recently raged, and there are fears of a new cholera epidemic.

Despite the liberal government's attempts to calm the situation through the intervention of these poor relief boards and the attempt to control the epidemics, more radical groups continued to exert pressure. In early 1848, Spilthoorn was chairman of the Ghent branch of *Association Démocratique*. Meanwhile, Jottrand wants to achieve more social justice through constitutional means. He primarily opposes the role of the nobility and the royal family in the country's governance. The doctrinaire liberals are not entirely happy with the actions of the more radical elements of the *Association Democratique* and much less with the fulminant interventions of Victor Considerant. That much is clear when *L'independance Belge*, the newspaper and mouthpiece of the capital's liberals is being urged to defend liberalism in a more cautious and moderate tone. Ultimately, it's the only Belgian newspaper with international appeal well-regarded in high financial circles, and under the control of the current Belgian government leader Charles Rogier. Radical language is not welcome.

Oddly enough, the radical liberals receive support in a certain sense from liberal-Catholic quarters. *Le Journal des Flandres* and her Flemish doppelganger *Den Vaderlander* oppose the conservative Ultramontane Catholic leaders and support the meetings of the *Association Democratique* in the name of

freedom of organisation and assembly. There are strong reactions to the indignant condemnation of that liberal group in the Catholic*Organe des Flandres* and *Journal de Bruxelles*.
Even King Leopold I is not at ease with the advancement of what he calls the French spirit. Count de Woyna relates that the monarch spoke to him about this and says: '*the king told me, it is indeed only the French spirit, the spirit of the Jacobins of the first years of the French Revolution, which in Switzerland, but also in Italy and in the south of Germany, by infiltrating the minds of the progressives, of the Swiss, Italian, German and other socialists, which, by acclimatising in all the countries of Europe, and which, by introducing itself into the masses it denationalises, threatens all thrones and all governments*'. The only hope the king seems to have, again according to the count, is that in the medium term the exaggerations of that club will open the eyes of liberal Catholics and lead them back to the established order.

In mid-January 1848, during a return trip to Moresnet, Johanna and Henri exchange news. Johanna tels Henri, for example, that Diesterweg had apparently fallen in disgrace in Berlin. Apparently, his demands for the reform of all higher education went further than the authorities wanted to hear. Johanna learned that he decided to close his seminaries in Pankow. She was unsure whether his Pestalozzi association, which supported the widows and orphans of teachers, would continue to operate.
Henri tells Johanna that the Chinese Hong he once spoke of is apparently pursuing a mystical rather than a revolutionary path. He founded a sect in his homeland, convinced he is a younger

brother of Jesus Christ. This is his ultimate interpretation of his visions, based on his reading of Liang Fa's book. He emphasises the enormous difference between the chosen and the damned. The core of his ideology is the necessity of morally correct behaviour. Henri says he's curious to see how the new sect will take root.

This year's events in France and Belgium will distract Henri from his interest in the emerging Hong sect. In Moresnet, he and his friends closely follow the newspapers, while also trying to stay abreast of all the new steps taken by *Alliance Démocratique*. Conservative Catholics are clearly afraid. One of their mouthpieces, the *Gazette de Liège,* already publishes its concerns on February 1st about an emerging revolution that will give the wealthy citizens little chance of survival. But the liberal press is attentive and wants to protect the Belgian government, consisting of doctrinaire liberals. So, without much hesitation, it provides a sounding board for the voice of the people. Thus, the liberal counterpart of the *Gazette*, of *Liège,* the *Journal de Liège* informs its readers, primarily industrialists and merchants, the must consider that workers must be emancipated to make universal suffrage possible. This is also clearly the position of leaders like Hubert Walthère Frère-Orban.
Amidst the reports of social unrest caused by the famine and the miserable conditions of factory workers, the death sentences of two small-time workers, François Rosseel and Guillaume Van den Plas, provide a welcome distraction. Both are found guilty by the jury at the Assize Court of Brussels of the robbery-murder of their landlady, Mrs. Evenepoel, after first killing two maids.

On February 18, the guillotine is mounted on a scaffold at the Halle Gate. The public execution in the heart of Brussels' working-class neighbourhood rather than on the Grand Place as usual raises questions in Henri's local pub. *Observateur Belge* mentions that the expected influx of people justifies the move, but Henri's friends see political motives here. The doctrinaire liberals seem to speak for the people, yet they want to send a clear message to the working-class families that violence is still punishable by death. Although Henri doesn't immediately see the connection between the punishment of a robbery and possible political action, he cautiously admits that the spectacle of the scaffold captures everyone's imagination.

A few days later, the big news broke from France that, after the king had been deposed, a new republic had been proclaimed. Power seemed to be in the hands of a number of intellectuals. The writer Lamartine, the lawyers Crémieux, Marie de Saint-Georges, and Ledru-Rollin, the astronomer and physicist Arago, and the former republican Garnier-Pagès were part of the provisional government. Until then, the press had paid more attention to the murder trials. The political situation in Paris was seen as a kind of *fait divers*. Now that Henri learns of the establishment of a new republic in France, he admits that all the attention paid to the Assize Court cases may have had political undertones. This becomes even clearer when Johanna translates messages for him from a copy of the *Boodschapper van Gent*.It takes a very critical stance toward what is described as the mercantile bourgeoisie. Meanwhile, the doctrinaire liberal press, like the moderate Catholic newspapers, continues to portray

Belgium as an island of tranquility in the midst of a turbulent ocean: France is republican again, the Rhineland is experiencing serious revolutionary upheaval, even the Netherlands are enduring a constitutional crisis, but, it is said, here everything remains thankfully calm.

Despite all this, the doctrinaire liberal press has repeatedly taken a rather positive stance toward the French Republicans. Charles Rogier intervenes a few times, primarily to calm diplomatic tensions between Belgium and France and prevent further Republican dissemination. But the conservative Catholic press pulls out all the stops: liberalism and the principle of popular sovereignty are reprehensible.

The blinded people are being manipulated by a few ambitious revolutionaries, it is written. Henri raises his eyebrows when he reads, among other things: '*It is in the nature of the people to be led and therefore to obey and not to command. Whoever says people says submission and not sovereignty.*' Johanna also sees this as an attack by all the arrogant, conservative forces on any educational initiative that aims to increase the knowledge of the common people. She says that in this regard, it would be useful to examine precisely what the revolutionary representatives propose regarding the generalisation of education that is not subject to religious or other doctrinal viewpoints. She adds that she herself wants to try to further develop her Kindergarten, here in the barn of their farm in Moresnet, but that she will continue to apply for a place in the school that is run by the paternalistic *Société Vieille-Montagne*. This paternalism is, of course, partly the result of the fear the propertied class lives in, without wanting to admit it.

They themselves believe that the natural school, with boys and girls, which stimulates the intellectual development of all children, as proposed by Karl Fröbel, is a better long-term solution for the generalisation of suffrage than the paternalistic school, made available by the wealthier bourgeoisie to the poor without sufficient attention being paid to *Free labour*, as Friedrich Fröbel says, which she herself extends into a concept of *free intellectual work and labour.*

Henri and Johanna's Belgian friends feel that the *Sûreté* is alarmed. People are being followed in Brussels, Ghent, Liège, and Antwerp. Friends of friends come to Moresnet for a while because they feel safer here. In Brussels, the last days of February are rather chaotic. According to well-informed sources, the king himself has reportedly instructed Charles Rogier to keep a close eye on the French border and to keep himself well-informed about the Parisian revolutionary clubs that might also have followers in Belgium. There are even whispers that the king has proposed abdicating and proclaiming a republic.

But things aren't moving that fast. From Moresnet, Henri and his friends see how the liberal ministers cleverly try to defuse tensions. They open doors to smaller liberal groups who feel more closely aligned with the French Republicans than the governing doctrinaire liberals. Census taxes are lowered, which instantly doubles the number of voters. This benefits the petty bourgeoisie and should strengthen the liberals' position. To ensure that these new votes actually benefit them, laws that favour conservatives and the king in the appointment of mayors are suspended. Stamp duty on newspapers is abolished, and the

combination of a public administration position and a parliamentary mandate is prohibited.

Henri believes these are primarily false solutions, based on bourgeois reasoning. "Ultimately", he tells his friends, "they want to convince us that Belgium no longer needs a revolution, like the French, because the events of 1830 already entailed that revolution. Furthermore, everything has already been done to materially improve the living conditions of the working population. It would be sufficient to keep the liberals in power to maintain what has already been achieved and to continue adapting to future needs. And here the final trump card is played: the social improvements that exist here are the result of Belgium's very existence. So no new French, German, Swiss, or Dutch adventures, but let us preserve Belgian nationality and the Belgian government. It's as if everyone is being asked to say out loud *Union and order, our (Belgian) fate depends on it*"…a nice bourgeois liberal analysis, I must say…"

One of the French friends who listened attentively to Henri now says: "I think you're right, and I think I know why the doctrinaire liberals, as you say, are pushing that line of reasoning. In France, there's talk of setting up national workshops, overseen by labor committees with large representation from the working population. Workdays would be reduced to 10 hours, and there's talk of establishing workers' associations. These kinds of measures are being kept hidden from the working population in Belgium, so they won't become aware of their situation. I think they want to prevent, at all costs, the capital-based industrial model of the Belgian economy

from being challenged by an economic model based on labour organisation, such as the one they plan to build in France."
From *Calamine* Johanna and Henri closely follow the actions of the Belgian government and those closely associated with it. In contrast to the radical wing of the *Association Démocratique* and among them, Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, another group proposes to elevate the working class from its misery rather than freeing it from the liberal industrial model and thus creating a different society. Jottrand belongs in this group. This contradiction even provokes a brief rift between Jottrand and Marx, who resigns his membership in the movement for a while. But the revolution of 1848 brings them back together, and the during that period the *Association Démocratique* also became the publisher of the *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung*.
After the proclamation of the new French Republic, Belgian government circles wanted to silence the troublemakers. Expel foreigners become easier. One of the targets is Friedrich Engels, who writes in the *Deutsche Brüsseler Zeitung* that bourgeois rule would now collapse everywhere and be violently broken. Victor Considerant is also dangerous. After he writes to his liberal kindred spirit Charles Rogier: '*Tomorrow, the Belgium of yesterday will no longer exist, and yet you will combine, predict and calculate things, as if legal fictions can withstand these electrical disturbances that suddenly transform a calm nation into an indomitable storm.*'. For *Sêcurité* a foreigner who writes such letters to the head of government cannot be but suspicious.
With regret, but without being surprised, Johanna and Henri see how the *Association Démocratique* is now the most suspected

group. Of course, government circles want first and foremost expel the couple Jenny and Karl Marx. The vice-chairman of the *Association* has now written himself a communist manifesto himself, largely inspired by the *Manifesto of Democracy* written by Considerant in 1843. The Marx family was a nuisance and had to leave Belgium. In early March, Marx receives the expulsion order signed by King Leopold I. He is required to leave the country within 24 hours, via a border of his choosing. There are hopes for a swift settlement, but the day Marx packs his bags, he and his wife are arrested by an overzealous police officer. The next day, both are released and immediately depart for Paris. Ultimately, the case is widely discussed in the press and even in parliament. Henri and Johanna claim that whoever holds power in Belgium is grossly ignoring Montesquieu's principles and mixing legislative, executive, and judicial powers.
From March 15th onward, Henri and Johanna receive regular reports. Five days earlier, a Belgian legion had reportedly been assembled in Paris to impose the republican and social revolution on Belgium. The newspapers initially made no mention of this, although Count Woyna reportedly informed the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Only in *Débat Social* the article *Droit au but* is full of references to a better future that is close at hand.
However, from mid-March onwards, it seems as if the peace and quiet is over. *Den Vaderlander* talks about the presence of agitators and troublemakers in Brussels. The *Précurseur d'Anvers* and the *Observateur Belge* call once's more upon the industrialists and the propertied bourgeoisie with the slogan '*prevention is better than cure*' to free up as much money as

possible to put people to work. The king and the high aristocracy are the example: haven't they just significantly increased the number of workers employed on their properties? Only that way can the famine and discontent be tackled, according to these newspapers. The Minister of Finance submits a proposal for a 40 million franc government loan. And once again, the Catholic opposition agrees: the *Journal de Bruxelles* tries to convince the affluent bourgeoisie that it is better to make a sacrifice today to safeguard private fortunes and the country's politics for the future. *L' Indépendance Belge* announces that a lot of money is needed to circumvent the storm that is thundering nearby. The *Journal de Liège* puts it in a slightly different tone: that government loan is necessary and voting against it would jeopardise labour benefits and hand workers over to dangerous sources of inspiration, fueled by misery and hunger.
Then comes the news that on March 24, an armed group of the *Légion Belge* led by Jules Fosses, marched towards the Belgian border, while workers in Ghent and the province of Luxembourg had risen in revolt. On March 26, reports are heard everywhere, including in Moresnet, that a Belgian republican army and its escaped Spartacuses were advancing.

"*Risquons tout*, it seems very appropriate," says Henri.
"But it has little to do with the Legion's intentions," replies his French friend. "It's true they tried to enter Belgium through that border post in the Mouscron region, but the name has nothing to do with the wishful thinking of our adventurous friends. According to some, it was the name of a cabaret there, which went bankrupt due to debt about a hundred years ago.

According to others, it's the encouragement smugglers give each other every time they cross the border with smuggled goods."
"That could be a good name for some of the pubs in this area, wouldn't it?" Henri says with a wink at the innkeeper.
He responds with a smile and says, "I don't know why," at which everyone present bursts out laughing.
"The rest of the story is sadder," the Frenchman continues. "That Belgian Legion of about 2,000 men was met there, in the border village of *Risquons Tout*, by 250 soldiers under the command of General Fleury-Duvay. A cannon was fired. Seven of the Legion's men were killed and twenty-six wounded. The rest dispersed, and according to what I heard, 60 were also captured."
"So, in the end, that Belgian Legion didn't amount much," Henri believes. "I wonder to what extent everything hasn't been exaggerated. A whole witch hunt has been created around Marx that ultimately surpassed *Sûreté* itself. It seems as if anything too liberal must be silenced, and that even goes too far for Minister Houssy himself."
"Yes," says the innkeeper, "we heard from our Brussels friends that his cabinet sent a circular advising very moderate deportations, especially of workers who only superficially criticise Belgian nationality. The doctrinaire liberals have gotten themselves into a rut, I think. They want freedom and greater participation, but don't quite know how to go for it. They probably have too many vested interests. How else are you supposed to interpret Minister Houssy when he says *'it is sufficient to keep an eye on these suspicious persons in order to take action against them as soon as their words or writings tend to*

incite disorder and endanger public safety'. It's all very vague, and one can go in any direction to silence people."
"Speaking of silencing," says Henri. "You already know, of course, that the *Association Démocratique* is held responsible for the raid on Risquons Tout. Several members were convicted at the Assize Court in Antwerp, including François Mellinet and Victor Tedesco. They face the death penalty for conspiracy against state security.

In the following months, tensions surrounding the French Republic's influence in Belgium gradually diminished. After all, the reduction in census levies had given the less educated population the opportunity for better representation in parliament. The affluent middle class and conservative interest groups quickly realised that the workers were not sufficiently aware of their position and were therefore relatively harmless. The danger was seen primarily as coming from the petty middle class, hence the small concession in levies.
On the other hand, thanks to the whole fuss surrounding the *Association Démocratique* around the Risquons Tout episode, the Belgian industrial and Voltaire-an bourgeoisie found reasons to defend the usefulness of religion to the people in the interests of the employers' class. The *Journal de Liège* explains that recent events teach us the most formidable enemy of freedom is no longer the ultraconservatives, but is hiding under what threatens to engulf us every day, not only here, but throughout Europe: republican socialism.
Caution remains exercised and the death sentences of convicted members of the *Association Démocratique* are not carried out.

They are locked up, and partly as a result, the association further disintegrates.
Meanwhile, France has finally legally renounced the slave trade. The 1802 law partially repealed in 1815 but then reinstated, is now completely repealed. This is well received at Henri's local pub, but what more amusing are the new adventures of Fanny Mosselman, who is having a love affair in Paris with the half-brother of President Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte. Charles Le Hon is acknowledging the children born from that relationship. Fanny, who seems to be a born Parisian salonnière of the last century, meanwhile maintains ties with the former royal family and the Belgian royal family. One wonders how she pulls it all off.
Johanna receives news from Prussia. Johanna Küstner and Karl Fröbel are married. They have settled in Hamburg, where they will lead the Women's College. Karl writes that he has invited his uncle to give seminars. Johanna is enthusiastic, not only because of the establishment of another women's college, but also because this will raise awareness of the early childhood activity centers and kindergartens. It gives her renewed strength for her own project, now that another baby is joining the family. Monique Teacher is expanding the family to five.
At that time Johanna hears about the *Lisztmania*, as some music lovers describe the popularity of the Hungarian-Austrian composer. He apparently travels from Turkey to Portugal, from Spain to St. Petersburg, giving concerts that draw thousands of admirers.
Henri receives indirect news from the American northern hemisphere. The American occupation of Texas apparently leads

to a war with Mexico, in which António de Santa Anna and his army are defeated. As a result, California is now also American. This doesn't improve the situation of the native Indians; on the contrary. Friends tell him about a new wave of immigration and a large migration towards San Francisco, after news of abundant gold discoveries spread like wildfire. Many Walloon and French working-class sons apparently join this new exodus. Jean-Nicolas Perlot is soon among them.
The wave of European white immigration to America does nothing to change the slave trade from Angola and Mozambique. Decade after decade, some 25,000 Black slaves continue to be shipped from those areas to America by steamboat each year. Despite laws against this trade, both French traders and immigrant colonists continue to ignore it and fully exploit enslaved Black people.

"Frederick, can you keep an eye on Lut while mommy is breastfeeding Monique?" asks Johanna.
"Yes, Mom" responds Frederick from between the bales of straw. He's just building a new house-with-a-maze with Lut, so Mom's request comes just in time. So they can continue playing quietly without being bothered.
Johanna watches her children play and thinks about how her garden will be busier again in a couple of weeks. She also thinks about the new challenge she faces. After several attempts to work with the school of *Société Vieille-Montagne*, she has understood that her views on education differ too much from the so-called village school of *Calamine*. That school isn't much different from most of the common schools in neighbouring

Belgium. Her friends from Brussels, Ghent, Liège, and Oostende often tell the same story: village schools are established in small buildings that resemble the local town hall. But there are barely enough teachers. Recently, teacher training colleges have also been added. However, the schools often have only one or two classrooms, so children of different ages are together. This can promote the natural learning process that Karl and Friedrich Fröbel often talk about, but only where there is less enthusiasm for the package lessons of Lancaster or even Lasalle. And that's the biggest stumbling block for Johanna: she completely agrees with what her grandfather once said: the *factory organisation* in line with the expanding industrial activities is the *instructional organisation*. It's difficult to expect anything different from factory owners than an instructional model where children are brought together to have them follow lessons in a chorus at a perfect rhythm, leading to the finished product. She can't even blame them.

Meanwhile, she can in a way agree with her friends that the school of *Calamine* is perhaps better than no school at all. They explain that in Belgium, parents have to request free education themselves if there isn't a school nearby. And that's not easy if those parents are themselves illiterate.

Monique has fallen asleep while sucking. Johanna puts her in her crib and goes to pick her other two children out of the straw. After a dinner of porridge and a cheese sandwich, both children go to bed, where Johanna reads them a short Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale from a French translation.

Henri enters with their neighbours. When the children have

fallen asleep, Johanna joins them. They cut a loaf of bread, and Johanna fetches a fresh goat cheese from the front cellar, while Henri places a jug of homemade rhubarb wine on the table. Although little known in Belgium, rhubarb is well-established in parts of Prussia. Henri learned how to grow rhubarb and make fruit wine from it with a newcomer from the Hamburg region who settled in Moresnet a few years ago.

"Have you thought about what you're going to do with the older children in your Kindergarten?" asks Johanna's neighbour.

"I've now collected quite a few children's books, which I read aloud myself. But I also have Dutch and French poetry collections for children. I also have a number of schoolbooks in Dutch, German, and French. And of course, I have everything Fröbel made for young children's activities. That's going to get me quite far. My friends in Oostende have described in detail how work was done on Keizerskaai almost a hundred years ago — imagine!"

"So you think our children will have it better than in the *Vieille Montagne* school?"

"I'm sure of it," says Henri. "Besides, they'll get a broader view of the world."

Johanna notes: "I don't want to sound too learned, but I would like to mention some of Diesterweg's reflections. He says that, when it comes to democracy, he attaches more importance to evolution than to revolution, especially from an educational perspective. The educational principle, he says, demands respect for human nature and for the individual and their stimulation to full development. Therefore, expression, activity, and initiative

are the basis for a natural and therefore joyful life experience. The stimulations to develop the senses, strengthen the body, and stimulate the will to explore are the same for being lucid in the discovery of things. Diesterweg says that the mind must be provided with appropriate nourishment and thus constantly progress. The educational principle that leads to democracy prohibits arbitrary assumptions and manipulations of human nature. It also condemns any encouragement to act blindly and mechanically. Any mechanical exercise, memorisation, or the compulsive imposition of unfamiliar subjects is absolutely unacceptable if you strive for democratic development. Especially after the events of the last two years, Diesterweg who began to emphasise the idea that people should take up their own learning activity as a guarantee of democracy."

"We don't mind at all if you act a bit educated, Johanna," says her neighbour. "While you're talking about Diester…?"

"Diesterweg," Johanna completes.

"Right, while you were walking along Diesterweg," her neighbour continues, "I thought about what I read from Ernest Schleiermacher. He wrote about fifty years ago that he goes beyond the pedagogical principles of '*natural self-development*' to embrace a '*education for community*': one of his propositions is that individual intentions, by their very nature, are already directed toward conviviality and universal social goals. Another is that only democracy can shape individual will. Public life must correspond to and reflect what is pedagogically and psychologically necessary for the healthy growth of the individual. The conditions for good education are those of a

healthy democracy. Thus, pedagogical and political processes condition each other.

"Ha," Henri interjects, "That does seem to be an argument for Auguste Comte. If I understood what I read of him, he says that humans alone cannot attain the essence of things and that only facts investigated and experienced have universal value. Therefore, only positive knowledge, knowledge derived from observation and experience, is useful. All metaphysics must therefore be discarded. As an aside, that's not exactly an argument a theological philosopher would appreciate. I think Auguste Comte means that, in addition to the empirical sciences concerned with "dead nature" — physics and chemistry — there are also the sciences of humanity, of evolving living humanity, and that this science perhaps replaces philosophy in a certain sense. Doesn't Auguste Comte speak somewhere of social physics as the science of humanity?"

"And yet," Johanna thinks, "I have more confidence in Diesterweg's analysis although I find Schleiermacher's suggestion interesting. More interesting, in any case, than Comte's development of what I would call a religion without God, that *Religion de l'Humanité* he's talking about, making himself immediately a grand priest of it. He doesn't glorify just One Great Spirit, but all of The Great Spirits, and I find his adage '*everything is relative, and that alone is absolute*' somewhat grandiloquence."

"I don't want to be negative, but what can be called somewhat relative, here next door, in Belgium, is that very moderate liberal call for improving the lot of workers. I don't think it's inspired by

the Diesterweg educational principles that Johanna just mentioned," says the neighbour. Did you read *La Liberté et la République* in the *Journal de Liège*? It simply states that the workers' lot deserves improvement, but that this improvement cannot go beyond the conditions established by the constitution. The freedoms guaranteed by the constitution are therefore, according to the author, the only permissible means to improve the workers' lot. And that freedom, as it exists in Belgium, will peacefully implement all desirable social reforms. I have my doubts about this. The neighbouring country's constitution is merely a means of convincing the upper and lower classes that everything will work out in time, but only according to the rules of the upper classes. I think we need the strength of the ignorant masses."

"Hey, here come our radical neighbours," laughs Henri. "That's why you'd better stay here for the time being. After all, your radical agitations and theories about labour organisations are not only resolutely rejected, but you could also be prosecuted for spreading them. According to the ruling class, you threaten to destroy the freedom of industry, cause capital to disappear, and dry up the sources of prosperity. Where I completely agree with you is when you say that the doctrinaire liberals and even the moderate petty bourgeoisie are not striving for a fully developed democracy."

There's a brief silence after Henri's final intervention. He takes advantage of it to refill the glasses, whereupon Johanna says, "May I tell you a short story of a completely different nature? It's about that old story of Saint Nicholas (Sinterklaas), who was

transformed from a Catholic white saint into a sort of Protestant black bogeyman in the second half of the seventeenth century. I have a little book by Jan Schenkman here. *"Saint Nicholas and his servant"* recently published in Amsterdam. Look, it's a kind of picture book. My colleague, a teacher who worked at a private school in Amsterdam until last year, has quite an imagination. Now Sinterklaas is a white holy man again. Imagine, he is riding on a horseback across the rooftops of every city, dropping gifts down for the good or the rod for the naughty children. Suddenly, Sinterklaas comes from Spain, perhaps he originates from the region of the first Jesuits, you never know. He's modernised a bit, though, because he arrives by steamboat — oh signs of the times. But the black bogeyman hasn't completely disappeared. He's now the helper of the Spanish Sinterklaas, perhaps even his slave — after all, they come from Spain, and slaves have been traded there for a long time, haven't they? But it could also be that this is simply a kind of xenophobia. Jan Schenkman is known for his rather farcical and condescending attacks on Semitic peoples. Meanwhile, one of his poems is spreading rapidly in the Netherlands. It starts with *'Zie ginds komt de stoomboot uit Spanje weer aan [Look, there comes once more the steamboat from Spain'*. Saint Nicholas since time immemorial…"

"Or at least since steamboats came into existence," Henri notes. "Perhaps it would be fitting to ask Wagner to set the poem to music. He'll surely find a kindred spirit in Schenkman regarding Jews. He's recently railed against what he considers Judaism in music. He has an arrogant simplicity that is simultaneously

disturbing: when he speaks negatively about someone, he systematically concludes that that person is either Jewish themselves or must have a Jewish mother. The old religious disputes cast long shadows among arrogant people who wield power, whether in the form of musical talent or financial dealings."

The friends empty their glasses, and the neighbours desire Henri and Johanna a good night. It's a beautiful late summer evening, and they stroll quietly back to their own house, happy to have found good lodgings in the now relatively quiet La Calamine.

It's true that the region is flourishing. This has both positive and negative aspects. Here, too, there are Enslaved by Power. After all, about half the population of Neutral Moresnet works for the *Vieille-Montagne* zinc mine. They are mostly young people who easily find entertainment in the many cabarets where widows prostitute themselves. There are numerous inns with a wide variety of gambling. There are reports of over eighty drinking establishments, and the local excise-free grain jenever is, of course, widely available. And there is still only one police officer in Neutral Moresnet. The old Code Napoleon sometimes seems to be sufficient: if offenders are punished locally, that can still include corporal punishment.

On the other hand, there are no extradition treaties between Neutral Moresnet and the surrounding countries that together form the four-country point at Vaalserberg.

So, the freethinkers, who in neighbouring countries would at least be monitored by local security services, feel at ease here. They make up a small portion of the population of nearly seven

hundred locally born Neutrals, along with about eight hundred Prussians, slightly more Belgians, and a smaller population of around two hundred Dutch. They feel at home in this mixed group of just over 2,500 souls and are happy that their offspring are settling in at Johanna's *Kindergärten*, along with the other children of the freethinkers.

End of book 05

A strange letter

Dear Pascal

We are taking advantage of small glitches in the space-time continuum to allow you to become a saga of educators, pedagogues, and anthropogogues. The saga was first published in 122.15 (Holocene calendar), which corresponds to the year 2215 according to the calendar you use in the 21st century.

The dynasty spans 20 generations, from 1630 to 2222 in your era.
When we studied your century in preparation for the work, we found your name and your interest in dialogical learning. That is why we kindly ask you to further disseminate the documents we send whenever we get the chance.

You can rest assured. The glitch in the continuum will have no impact on the past or future of living people. Only documents can be sent through it.

On behalf of the team of writers,

Maria Liber

Babitha is a historian and focuses on the relationship between oppressor and oppressed. She has studied, among other things, the influence of the arrogance of the 117th and 118th-century rulers of Zone 2 West on the suffering of the local population and the population from the colonised zones.
Zainabu Cheboi studies how, in a hierarchical society, xenophobic and fascist mindsets, combined with forms of human and non-human communication, can serve as a binding agent for local communities.

During the first half of the 118th century, we follow the last three generations of the first Magister-Auctor dynasty.
Children and young people are the new slaves of power in an industrialising Europe. Tensions between those who want to rule as monarchs and those who advocate republican government determine the ever-increasing grip of the emerging nations on the educational system.
In the relative tranquility of the micro-free state of Moresnet, Johanna Lemaître continues to advocate for a dialogic and natural education system. She can rely on the previous generations of the dynasty. Friedrich and Karl Fröbel are sources of inspiration.